

U.N. affirms Palestinians right to self-determination

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. General Assembly voted 160-2 Friday to reaffirm the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, with only Israel and the United States casting negative votes. Norway, which facilitated the Oslo accords, abstained along with five other countries: Georgia, the Dominican Republic, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Uruguay. But the rest of the European Union, Russia, Japan and China were among those supporting the non-binding resolution. Earlier this week, the EU helped derail a resolution sponsored by Arab and Muslim states to upgrade the status of the Palestinian observer mission to the United Nations. Israel and the U.S. strongly opposed the measure. The Europeans proposed instead that Secretary-General Kofi Annan study the idea, a move which would have effectively killed it.

Jordan Times

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King receives Benny Hen

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday received at the Royal Court American preacher of Palestinian origin Benny Hen, who is currently on a visit to Jordan. Mr. Hen expressed appreciation for King Hussein's efforts to attain peace in the Middle East region. Mr. Hen will pay a visit to Dar Al Bir to acquaint himself with Jordan's efforts in the humanitarian and social fields. Mr. Hen donated \$100,000 for the Noor Al Hussein Foundation. Attending the audience was Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Agel Biltaji.

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King says Jordan faces most difficult circumstances, asks parliamentarians to face upcoming challenges

'If we go back to U.N. resolutions on partitioning of Palestine, the city should have been internationalised'

New Cabinet could include Members of Parliament

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday said Jordan is now facing the most difficult circumstances in its history, warning that the challenge is great and so is the task.

"Let us hope that we will rise to the level of confronting the challenges and shouldering our responsibilities," King Hussein said at a lunch he hosted for the senators and Lower House deputies.

He told his audience that the government plans to submit to the Parliament a draft of the elections law which would cater to the requirements of the modern age and ensures equality for all Jordanians in the coming elections.

He said that the government has also to address other issues so that Jordan can attain its aspirations of enhancing the democratic march and in involving all citizens in the decision-making process.

"A single person or group cannot shoulder the responsibilities on their own but collectively they can do it."

progress. "We have to learn from our experiences and mistakes, and we have to create ideas and we have to have political parties emanating from Jordan and seeking to serve its national interests and not individuals because they will end in failure. This had happened in the past and will continue to happen until our

is no less important than a minister and therefore I intend to give my ideas to the government after we have ensured that we are giving equality to all."

Referring to the question of professional unions in Jordan, the King said that this question will be put before Parliament for discussion.

"If we neglect our duty and shift our attention to politics or towards marginalising the role of Parliament, this in fact will be unacceptable because it does not lead to any result," warned the King.

King Hussein said that though the professionals working for the government have a duty towards their unions, they also have to respect the rules of their own departments and they should be accountable for their work to the government. "This question is also

'When we say... in Jerusalem, we mean we do not accept... a Jerusalem on another site'

said the King.

"We have to start with ourselves through our actions, our work, our shouldering the responsibilities. This should help us build our power and to serve as a source of power for our Arab and Islamic Nation," said the King.

Referring to the political parties law, the King said that too many political parties in the arena obstruct

methods of work change. We must propose ideas based on studies and convictions," King Hussein pointed out.

Referring to the prospect of forming a new government, he said: "The new government could include technocrats, or could involve a number of deputies and senators as well, but we have not yet reached a final decision until now. However, I believe that everyone of you

(Continued on page 7)

Parliament pledges to execute King's directives hand-in-hand with Cabinet

AMMAN (Petra) — Parliament on Saturday pledged to execute His Majesty King Hussein's directives included in his Speech from the Throne at the opening of the House on Nov. 25 concerning domestic and external affairs. The two Houses voiced absolute support for the King's efforts to achieve a comprehensive Middle East peace and to help the Palestinians establish their independent state on their national soil with its capital in Jerusalem.

Both Houses of Parliament, the Lower House and the Senate, expressed commitment to work hand-in-hand with the government in the enactment of laws, in dealing with corruption and in improving the performance of public administration.

"We share Your Majesty's views about the importance of cooperation between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities and we are determined to enhance the process of democracy, political pluralism and respect of human rights,"



King Hussein, sitting with the Holy Koran on his right, listening to both Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament's replies to the Speech from the Throne, at the Royal Palace on Saturday. The Parliament accused the government of Israel of placing obstacles in the face of peace for not implementing international obligations (Photo by Yousef Allan)

Lower House Speaker Sa'ad Hayel Srour said at the Royal Court in front of the King. HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Prime Minister, Cabinet members

and House members. "We assure Your Majesty that the House will address issues of public concern like corruption, favouritism, routine and

laxity in civil administration and to help enhance the society's production and achieve prosperity," said

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Jordan will not forgive those who spill its citizens' blood — Monarch

Iraq agrees to free 140 Jordanian prisoners, reduce death sentence on man charged with smuggling — Minister

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein on Saturday said that the Kingdom will not forgive or show leniency with any party that spills the blood of Jordanians and emphasised that Jordan will defend the lives of its citizens.

Referring to the execution of four Jordanians in Iraq on Monday, the King said that he does not care if such criticism angers the Iraqi leadership or causes them to react by cutting the supply of oil to Jordan.

"Jordanian blood is not cheap and we will not forgive any party that considers it cheap or spills it," the King said in a speech to Parliament members at the Royal Court.

"Maybe these words bring us new troubles. If somebody decides to cut the oil supply, we will tell them that we do not care, we will bring it from other sources," the

King said.

"They cut the oil supply in 1958 and after that, but we do not live by this oil," the King said in his speech.

The King was referring to the situation that followed the Iraqi army coup in 1958 against King Faisal that ended the Hashemite Union between the two countries.

Jordan imports more than 75,000 barrels of crude oil from Iraq daily.

The King's speech is considered the harshest attack against Iraq following the execution of the four Jordanians on charges of smuggling car spare parts.

"We pray to God to enable us to help end the suffering of Iraqis," the King added.

The King's words came amid news reports that Iraq has agreed to release 140 Jordanian detainees from its

jails.

Minister of Interior Nahir Rashid told reporters Saturday that "high level" contacts between the two countries resulted in securing an Iraqi pledge to commute the death sentence on another Jordanian citizen charged with smuggling car spare parts.

'We pray to God to enable us to help end the suffering of Iraqis'

"Following high level contacts between the two countries, Iraq agreed to release 140 detainees and also to commute the death sentence of a Jordanian who was sentenced to death," the minister said.

Iraqi Ambassador to Amman Nouri Al Weiss confirmed the news that his government was reducing the sentence of Ammar Ghaleb Shihabeddine.

"Contacts are going on between the two countries and I am optimistic that the death sentence will be reduced and you can assure his family of this," Mr. Al Weiss told the Jordan Times.

The ambassador said that he has no "confirmed" information that his government will release a group of Jordanian prisoners.

"May be there are contacts between the Jordanian Interior Ministry, through their representative in Baghdad, with Iraqi officials to seek the release of Jordanian prisoners but as far as I am concerned I have no information on this issue," Mr. Al Weiss said.

The ambassador ruled out

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan wants ties with Iran based on respect, dialogue amongst nations — Crown Prince

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has said that Jordan wants its relations with Iran to be based on mutual respect and continued dialogue within a wider Muslim and Arab framework.

"We look for normal and healthy relations with our Arab and Muslim neighbours, and Iran's role in this region is very significant," the Crown Prince said in a wide-ranging interview with the London-based Al Hayat.

"Our relations should be based on mutual respect and on exploring facts closely in order to understand each other. We cannot judge each other through the media," he added in the interview that appears in Al Hayat and the Jordanian dailies today.

"What we expect from our bilateral relations is an agreement on a method for work," the Prince said. "If our mutual interests require suspending links with Israel — though these links are

almost frozen in many fields — what is required, is to define a clear strategy" for that purpose, he said.

"Is there an Arab-Islamic strategy for war or peace? What is our political perspective towards peace-loving peoples and governments? How do we view the political stage beyond the present Israeli government? What is our political concept towards mass destruction weapons in this region?" Prince Hassan asked.

"There are real issues that require a resumption of close consultation and intense personal and direct contacts. It is fortunate that the Islamic conference was held in Tehran so that we can resume talks with Iranian officials after a break of almost 20 years."

Concerning the peace process, the Crown Prince said that each country should respect the other's stand. Syria, he said, has finalised all the stages of negotiations with Israel during the reign of the late Yitzhak Rabin and only security matters were left. Syria, he said, was ready to resume the talks from the point where they stopped.

"At the same time Syria has been demanding that we suspend our links with Israel although the option of making peace with Israel is a strategic Arab option."

Prince Hassan noted that Iran will chair the Islamic conference for the coming three years, and that the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) is in need of revival and a comprehensive and clear vision to achieve integration among Muslims.

Jordan, Prince Hassan said, is open to close

(Continued on page 7)

OIC summit opens new chapter in Iranian-Jordanian relations

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's delegation to the Islamic Summit in Iran has returned home with many "tangible results" that are expected to gradually ease the strain in Amman's ties with Tehran, officials and analysts said on Saturday.

They said the warm Iranian reception accorded to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on the first such high-level visit to Iran since the Islamist revolution in 1979, reflected Tehran's willingness to mend fences with the Kingdom.

Warming of ties was also evident in "the spirit of the final communiqué" which had many points that were expressed in the Crown Prince's speech. Foreign Minister Fayez Tarawneh told the Jordan Times on Saturday.

According to another

NEWS ANALYSIS official requesting anonymity, further proof of Iran's efforts at improving relations with Amman, was the final communiqué's recognition of Jordan's role in preserving holy Muslim shrines in Arab East Jerusalem — long a sour point in Jordan's ties with

Saudi Arabia and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Tehran's decision to free two Jordanian prisoners of war (PoW), and its acceptance of His Majesty King Hussein's invitation extended to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mohammad Khatami, to pay an official visit to Amman, are further testimony of the desire to strengthen bilateral ties, officials said.

Iranian foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi will also be

(Continued on page 7)

Cabinet expected to win House confidence after scrutiny on draft laws

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Deputies in the newly-elected Lower House are expected to scrutinise the government of Prime Minister Abdul Salaam Majali before granting it a vote of confidence later this week, officials and analysts said on Saturday.

The Cabinet adopted His Majesty King Hussein's Speech from the Throne, which inaugurated the 13th Parliament on Nov. 29, as its policy statement.

At least 55 of the 80 deputies in the chamber, elected on Nov. 4, are expected to vote in favour of Dr. Majali's team but after pressing him on key popular concerns raised by draft laws covering political parties, professional associations and press freedoms, they added.

"I believe the government will face heterogeneous opposition from different currents, but I also believe that at the end of the discussion the cabinet will

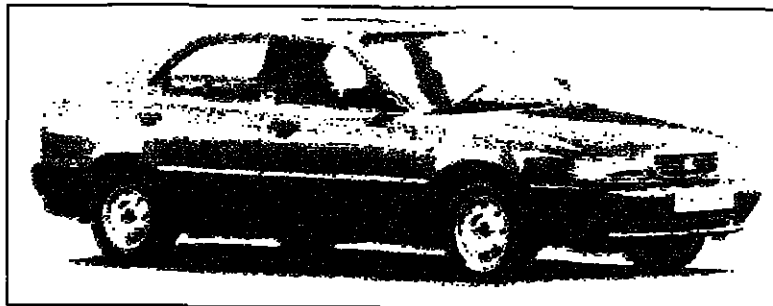
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Turkey dismisses Islamic criticism on Iraq incursion, ties with Israel

ANKARA (AFP) — President Suleyman Demirel on Saturday dismissed criticism by Islamic countries on Turkey's army incursions into Iraq, saying Ankara does not have an eye on Iraqi territory.

Mr. Demirel also told reporters here that Turkey's move to boost military cooperation with Israel was "its own business" and did not harm any third parties.

The 55-nation Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), at a leaders meeting in Tehran earlier this week, denounced Turkey for its military ties with the Jewish state and urged Ankara to withdraw its troops from neighbouring northern Iraq.

Mr. Demirel, who represented Turkey at the summit, cut his visit short and

returned home on Tuesday instead of Wednesday in response to the criticisms, according to analysts.

The Turkish army has been conducting frequent incursions into northern Iraq to fight separatist Turkish Kurds based there, and its troops fought the rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in the area as late as this week.

But Mr. Demirel said: "Had Turkey had the slightest intention to occupy Iraqi land, we would have done so in the past," adding Ankara respects Iraq's territorial integrity and that its troops are there only temporarily. "Turkey is not trying to gain Iraqi land, we are only fighting terrorists there to prevent them from attacking Turkish targets," he said.

Ankara complains that the PKK uses northern Iraq as a

rear base to stage attacks inside Turkey.

More than 27,000 people have been killed in PKK-related violence in Turkey's southeast since 1984 when the rebels launched their armed campaign for a Kurdish homeland.

The OIC summit also coincided with a visit by Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to Turkey that fuelled Islamic anger on Ankara's recently boosted ties with the Jewish state.

"With whom Turkey will cooperate is our own business. In addition, this kind of a relationship is not aimed at hurting any third party," Mr. Demirel said.

Turkey, Israel and the United States are due to hold joint naval manoeuvres in the eastern Mediterranean in the second week of January

despite protests by several Arab countries and Iran.

Another senior Turkish official also said Saturday that Ankara would not abandon military ties with Israel and will continue its operation against the PKK in northern Iraq despite resolutions critical of Turkey at the Islamic summit.

"We are going to continue military cooperation with Israel despite the OIC resolutions," state minister for relations with the Middle East countries, Ahmad Andican, said in an interview with Saudi newspaper Sharq Awsat.

Turkey last year boosted cooperation with Israel, signing two defence accords under which Israeli pilots conduct training flights in Turkish airspace.



PFLP ANNIVERSARY: Members of the Popular Front for Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) march during a rally, Saturday, in the autonomous West Bank town of Hebron. The PFLP, a left-wing PLO faction opposed to autonomy agreements with Israel, held demonstrations in the Palestinian territories to mark 30 years since its foundation on December 11, 1967, by Syrian-based George Habbash (in picture). Marchers in background carry a poster of Argentinian-born revolutionary Che Guevara (AFP photo)

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Black September' man killed in Lebanon

SIDON (AFP) — A Syrian member of the Palestinian Black September group hostile to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was killed on Saturday in a refugee camp in south Lebanon, police said. The bullet-riddled body of Mahmoud Mutran Jreidi, 36, was found at dawn on the edge of the Ain Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp on the outskirts of Sidon, the police said. Jreidi was a senior member of the Black September movement, which broke away from Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction in 1993 to protest at the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian accords, according to Fatah dissident Munir Maqad. In a statement, Mr. Maqad accused "agents paid by Mossad" of assassinating Jreidi who commanded a Black September reconnaissance unit.

Saudi diplomat murdered in Kazakhstan

ALMATY (R) — A Saudi diplomat has been murdered in his apartment in Kazakhstan having been stabbed 13 times in the head and stomach, police said on Saturday. Police said they were making every effort in the murder hunt in the resource-rich former Soviet Republic, but the motive for the killing was not immediately clear. "The second secretary at the embassy of Saudi Arabia was found dead in the flat he had been renting in central Almaty... on December 10," a police spokeswoman told Reuters, confirming a report in an Arab newspaper. She said that Ahmad Ouda Sawi had been stabbed 13 times in the head and stomach, probably earlier on Wednesday. "We presume the murder was committed earlier on December 10. Neighbours heard noises and strange cries from the diplomat's flat for at least half an hour but none of them rushed to call the police," the spokeswoman said. "An investigation, under the personal command of Almaty's senior police officials, is under way."

Millions of dollars lost in Cairo traffic jams

CAIRO (AFP) — Traffic jams in Cairo are to blame for residents losing 10 million working hours every day, or \$5.3 million a year, a newspaper reported Saturday. "Cairo's road network can handle at most 500,000 vehicles daily, but two million cars are on the roads every day," Al Jumhuriya said. "This chronic crisis is caused by the continual increase in the number of cars without an accompanying increase in the number of roads or enlarging them," Al Jumhuriya said, citing a study by the authorities. According to Cairo authorities, 48,000 minibuses used as shared taxis pitted the city's roads in 1997 compared to 10,000 a decade ago, the paper said.

Aoun blames interview cancellation on Syria

BEIRUT (AFP) — Former Lebanese prime minister Michel Aoun said Lebanon barred a private television station from airing an interview with him because he opposes Syrian hegemony in Lebanon. "My position on Syria is the reason for the ban on broadcasting the interview," General Aoun said in remarks published Saturday in Al Nahar newspaper. "The Syrian decision is the only valid one in Lebanon, where the leaders are only intermediaries," he said. The Lebanese authorities prohibited the private MTV television station from transmitting an interview with Gen. Aoun live Sunday from Paris.

Iraqi paper presents demands to Butler

BAGHDAD (R) — An Iraqi newspaper on Saturday presented a list of demands to visiting chief U.N. arms inspector Richard Butler including respect for Iraq's sovereignty, security and dignity and ending the "deliberately prolonged work" of U.N. inspectors.

The government newspaper Al Jumhuriya in a front-page editorial warned Mr. Butler that he should be "careful when he deals with sovereignty, which is a red line for Iraq."

The most influential Iraqi newspaper Babel again called Mr. Butler a "mad dog" and said his mission was doomed.

"The mad dog Butler is in Iraq in a mission which is already deemed a failure," Babel, owned by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday, said in one of its headlines.

Jumhuriya said Iraq's nuclear, missile and chemical weapons files should be closed because they were "achieved."

"I cannot report today that the missile, chemical or biological baskets are empty," Mr. Butler said.

The paper accused Butler of following American policy against Iraq.

"You have been repeating without any reservation America's charges and lies [against Iraq]," it said.

sovereignty and dignity.

"What the [U.N. Security] Council has compelled me to do is to discuss the question of access... UNSCOM must be allowed to go anywhere and see any document or interview any person," Mr. Butler told a Baghdad news conference.

Local government militiamen, alerted by the cries of the victims' relatives, went to the scene but the attackers had already fled, it said.

No one claimed responsibility for the killing, the latest in

Attackers kill five bakers in Algeria — paper

PARIS (R) — Attackers armed with swords and axes killed five bakers in their shop south of Algiers, an Algerian newspaper said on Saturday.

The attackers killed the five at their bakery in Ferroukha, near the garrison town of Blida, 50 kilometres south of Algiers on Friday, Al Watan reported.

Local government militiamen, alerted by the cries of the victims' relatives, went to the scene but the attackers had already fled, it said.

No one claimed responsibility for the killing, the latest in

a series of massacres of civilians in Blida province.

The newspaper also reported that Islamist rebels using home-made mortars shelled the southern town of Djelfa, but no one was hurt.

In Algiers, bomb disposal experts on Wednesday defused a booby-trapped car which had been set to explode in the Belcourt district, Al Watan said. Over 30 people have been killed in bomb attacks in the area this year.

Al Watan, usually well-informed about security matters, reported that about 25

rebels from the western region of Oran had infiltrated Algiers.

It said the group was led by Hassam Omar, leader of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The authorities have offered a reward of \$17,500 for information leading to the capture or death of Omar.

The government has blamed the GIA for massacres of civilians and bomb attacks in main cities.

Le Matin newspaper reported on Saturday that members of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) were making a strong effort to recruit sup-

porters and raise money at the country's 10,000 mosques.

"This return in force by fundamentalist militants at mosques in Algiers and main cities frightened many people who fear a repeat of a dark period," it said.

The FIS emerged as the main opposition force in the 1990s, building support at mosques in poor districts in the main cities.

Algeria plunged into violence in early 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which FIS had taken a commanding lead.

Egyptian police kill, arrest suspected militants

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian authorities killed two suspected Islamists and arrested 11 others in three separate raids on Friday, security sources said on Saturday.

They said a policeman was also killed when gunmen hiding in fields opened fire on a police car in the village of El Maghala in Minya province, 240 kilometres south of Cairo.

Police returned fire, killing suspected militant Hamed Galal Abul Ela, the sources

said. Two civilian passers-by were wounded in the shooting, they added.

In another raid, police killed suspected militant Munir Mustafa Abdul Hafez in the provincial capital of Tanta, some 100 kilometres north of Cairo, the sources said. Hafez was sentenced to death in absentia in 1996 for killing a senior police officer.

Police also arrested 10 of his followers, the sources said.

In a third police raid, suspected militant, Hussein Abdullah Abdul Malek, was arrested in the northern city of Amreya. Malek was sentenced in absentia to 15 years in jail for breaking into a gold shop in 1991.

Security officials believe all those killed and arrested were members of Egypt's largest Islamist organisation, the Gamaa Islamiyah (Islamic Group). The Gamaa claimed respon-

sibility for the massacre of 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians in the southern resort of Luxor last month.

The mass killing was the group's deadliest attack since it launched a campaign in 1992 to overthrow President Hosni Mubarak's government and install a strict Islamic state.

About 1,200 people, mostly policemen and militants, have been killed in political violence in Egypt since 1992.

Lebanese general helped militiamen kill prime minister, court told

BEIRUT (AP) — A Lebanese general colluded with right-wing militiamen in the 1987 assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami, a court heard Friday.

Brig. Gen. Khalil Matar led Christian militiamen to the military helicopter which was due to fly the Muslim prime minister from the northern port of Tripoli to the capital Beirut, according to

documents read in court by Justice Minister Honein, the head of the five-person judicial council.

Gen. Matar, wearing his uniform, said nothing as Mr. Honein read out the general's confession in the country's highest trial court.

Gen. Matar is being tried with former Christian warlord Samir Geagea and 14 other defendants for the

assassination of Karami, who was killed when his helicopter exploded during the Tripoli-Beirut flight on June 1, 1987.

Only Dr. Geagea, Gen. Matar and three others appeared in court Friday. The 11 others are fugitives and are being tried in absentia.

The confession said Gen. Matar, who commanded an army base in the Christian

heartland north of Beirut, was recruited as an informer by Geagea's security chief, Ghassan Touma, and was being paid \$2,000 a month at the time of the assassination.

Gen. Matar had access to communications among pilots and knew which helicopter would carry Karami.

The confession said Gen. Matar wanted the assassination to undermine his

rivals in army intelligence. In a separate confession, the accused militiaman Antoine Shehadi told the court that Gen. Matar identified Karami's helicopter to the persons who planted a bomb on it.

Asked if Touma could have acted without Dr. Geagea's consent, Gen. Matar said in the confession: "As far as I know, Ghassan Touma can-

not carry out an operation of this size without Dr. Geagea's approval."

Touma is one of the defendants being tried in absentia. He is believed to be in the United States.

Dr. Geagea is already serving three life terms for murdering two rival Christian politicians and attempting to kill a third.

JORDAN TELEVISION

PROGRAMME TWO
14:10 The Pink Panther
14:30 Johnny Quest
15:00 Energy Express
15:30 American Chart Show
16:30 Tarzan
17:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Kate and Allie
20:00 Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:30 Doc - Renegade
21:10 Renegade
22:00 News in English
22:30 North and South
23:15 The Jewel in the Crown

PRAYER TIMES

05:00 Fajr
06:23 (Sunrise) Duha
11:30 Dhuhur
14:15 Asr
16:38 Maghreb
18:00 Isha

CHURCHES

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614190.

WEATHER

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Min/Max temp.
Amman 06/16
Aqaba 12/20
Deserts 04/17
Jordan Valley 13/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 12, Aqaba 18 Humidity
readings: Amman 79 per cent,
Aqaba 65 per cent.

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Dr. Wafiq Qaddami 893542
Dr. Nasser Ibrahim 830432
Dr. Bahjat Bader 832642
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637085
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Al Salam pharmacy 636730
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Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 897467
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Central Amman Telephone
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Abdali Tel. Repairs 661101
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Khalidi Maternity 64281/6
Akileh Maternity 64244/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 6672279
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 60240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
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Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)900900
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Greek Catholic Hospital (02)27275
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ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
08:05 Amman (QAI) (RW)
08:25 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:45 London (RJ)
18:00 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:45 Paris, Brussels (RJ)
19:40 Rome (RJ)
20:00 Frankfurt, Athens (RJ)
21:30 Vienna (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
07:45 Amman (QAI) (RW)
09:05 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 Amman (QAI) (RW)
21:20 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Amman (QAI) (RW)
09:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAI) (RW)
21:50 Amman (QAI) (RW)

11:15 Rome (RJ)
11:30 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:30 Athens, Vienna (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
19:45 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 New Delhi (RJ)
22:30 Jakarta, Bangkok (RJ)
23:00 Jakarta (RJ)
23:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
00:45 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
01:00 Jeddah (RJ)
01:45 Damascus (RJ)
01:55 Sanja (RJ)
Other Flights
03:00 Athens (QAI)
04:20 Rome (AZ)
06:15 Beirut (ME)
06:40 Beirut, London (BA)
07:50 London (BA)
11:00 Sanja (FY)
13:15 Doha (GF)
14:50 Moscow (SU)
16:00 Doha (QR)
19:15 Jeddah (SV)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
Royal Wings (RW)
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Amman (QAI) (RW)
09:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
16:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
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Princess Basma highlights need for qualified personnel in development

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Basma Saturday opened a three-day workshop on "strategic planning for training personnel to work in social development" by emphasising the need for qualified and trained cadres to carry out the work of development institutions.

"Development institutions in Jordan still lack qualified personnel needed to promote the course of socio-economic development. This is partly because training for such endeavours is costly and requires huge financial allocations that burden their budgets," the Princess said at the meeting, which was attended by 50 participants representing governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned with social development affairs.

Noting that trained and qualified personnel are essential in achieving the goals of social and economic development, the Princess said it was for this reason that the Queen Zein Sharaf Centre for Social Development was created.

"Training constitutes a basic element for the success of any institution, but especially for those organisations concerned with development, since they deal with people," she said. Princess Basma thanked the British International Development Department, the Universities of Birmingham and Swansea, and the British ambassador to Jordan for their support for the centre.

Abdullah Abul Atta, the centre's director, said the centre, which was established four years ago, has played a remarkable role in training women cadres to assume roles in social development.



HRH Princess Basma speaks at the opening session of a three-day workshop focusing on training personnel for work in development fields (Petra photo)

The training of personnel, which has been supported by British specialists, takes the political, social, and economic development needs of society into consideration, he said.

Also Saturday, Princess Basma received a number of female representatives of non-governmental organisations to discuss a number of issues facing Jordanian women and to exchange views concerning their status.

Among the topics discussed at the meeting was

the government's plans to enact a new elections law. The group underlined the need to assign a quota for women in Parliament, which they said should not be less than 20 per cent.

The meeting was attended by Amal Sabbagh, secretary general of the Jordanian National Committee for Women, Shadia Nuseir, Princess Basma's advisor on women's affairs, and Salwa Naser, coordinator for non-governmental organisations in the national committee.

Higher education council approves application to establish American University of Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Council of Higher Education (CHE) Saturday announced its approval for the establishment of the American University of Amman, which is to be set up on 1,000 to 1,500 dunums within the Greater Amman region.

In a statement, the CHE said the university, which is under construction, should follow the guidelines applicable to other universities in Jordan. The decision was taken in

view of the reported growing demand for expanded higher educational opportunities in the Middle East and on the condition that it be granted accreditation by the United States.

The CHE had studied the application and the criteria as presented by the university's founding committee, chaired by Mohammad Adwan, before giving its consent, according to the statement.

The American University in Amman will be estab-

lished in four five-year plans, with each plan divided into five stages. The first stage will formally begin after the finalisation of the necessary legal procedures, the committee noted.

The founding committee said the first stage in the construction of the university, which entails civil work including the construction of the main faculties, the administration building, the services zone, libraries, and workshops, was expected to cost \$100

million. According to the statement, the founding committee will build dormitories and commercial facilities at the site, as well as a Middle East centre for studies in Arabic and other Semitic languages and an English language centre.

The university will have its own hospital, a waste water treatment plant, and other essential services, the statement continued.

The new university will maintain cultural links with

a number of well-known American universities and will supply Jordan with skilled manpower capable of carrying out socio-economic development plans. It will also offer courses in rare specialisations needed in the local labour market, according to the committee.

The new university, which will be similar to the American universities in Beirut and Cairo, will enroll up to 5,000 students, the committee said.

Court upholds man's life sentence for murder

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation upheld a recent Criminal Court ruling sentencing a 21-year-old man to life after he was found guilty of murdering and burning his grandmother in the Jabal Qossour area last year.

The convicted, identified only as F.M., originally received the death sentence by the Criminal Court in May after he was found guilty of the premeditated murder of his 65-year-old grandmother, Fidah, on Nov. 7, 1996.

His sentence was commuted by the same court because two of the victim's daughters dropped the charges against the defendant.

However, the Criminal Court prosecution appealed the ruling at the higher court and demanded the death penalty.

In its ruling, the Court of Cassation stated that "since the convict's family dropped the charges against their son, he may benefit from a reduction in penalty."

"I am content with the higher court's ruling, and I believe it was a just verdict," Defence Attorney Ali Talafah told the Jordan Times Saturday.

According to the prosecution charge sheet, the defendant plotted to kill his grandmother because "she constantly accused him of being a thief and a trouble maker, and he bought a knife for this purpose."

On the morning of the incident, the defendant monitored his grandmother's house, and when he made sure that she was alone, he went inside and stabbed her.

The defendant then found a towel, wrapped it around the victim's neck, and strangled her, court transcripts said.

He then placed paper on his grandmother's stomach, lit it, and fled the house, the transcript added.

Police officer gives testimony in trial of Syrian accused of triple murder

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A police officer testifying in the trial of a 35-year-old man accused of killing a Syrian family in June 1997 told the Criminal Court Saturday that he had examined a bag that contained clothes belonging to one of the victims.

Fateh Jlassi, a Syrian national, is charged with the murder of Jamal Abdo, 38, his wife Manal Othman, 35, and their child Khalid, 2, on June 17.

Testifying for the prosecution, Captain Maher Mohammad, 29, from the

Amman police department, said the clothes in the bag, which was found in a dumpster in Jabal Hussein, contained blood stains.

"After Mr. Jlassi confessed to the triple murder, we collected the bag and found the child's pants and shirt, which were covered with blood stains," Capt. Mohammad said.

Mr. Jlassi reportedly confessed to the authorities shortly after his apprehension that he killed the Syrian family in revenge for a financial dispute with Mr. Abdo's father.

He said he owed the victim's father seven million

Syrian lira (approximately JD116,000), adding that he had to sell his house in Syria to pay the debt, losing approximately JD70,000 as a result.

According to the charge sheet, Mr. Jlassi plotted to kill the Syrian family and travelled to Jordan on March 1 for this purpose.

On the evening of the incident, the suspect visited the family in their apartment, located near the University of Jordan, and drugged them, according to the charge sheet.

After the couple passed out, the suspect stabbed them to death with a kitchen

knife, set their apartment on fire, and abducted their child, the sheet said.

When the child fell asleep, the suspect strangled him, placed him in a plastic bag, and buried him at a relative's farm in Madaba, the sheet continued.

The court tribunal, presided over by Judge Mohammad Ajameh and including Judges Mifteh Mubeidin and Issa Hamdan, postponed the trial until Dec. 15 to hear the last prosecution witness, pathologist Ibrahim Ramahi, who failed to appear at Saturday's session.

Regulatory commission announces plans to shut down communications offices next year

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan's Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) has announced plans to close down more than 176 communication offices around the Kingdom by the start of 1998.

According to TRC General Director Youssef Abu Jamous, communication offices offer services to the public in return for money without being licensed and are therefore "illegal." He said they should be closed down at the end of the 60-day probation period granted by the TRC on Oct. 30 to all offices in order to amend their situation before the end of December 1997.

"They are stealing from the government. Therefore, we must make sure they stop," Mr. Abu Jamous said. He added that the local coin-operated pay phones will also be discontinued since they are considered impractical and demand a higher charge per minute.

There is also the problem of the availability of the phones, he added, which depends mainly on the pres-

ence of the owner.

Two companies, Trans Jordan for Communication Services (Alo phone booths) and the Jordanian Public Pay phone (JPP) services, were licensed by the government to correct "existing problems and provide the public, as well as visitors, with cheaper and better services," according to Mr. Abu Jamous.

The two companies use cards for the phones, both of which operate on a central computerised system. Abdul Haleem Hmoud, coordination manager of the JPP, said the new public phones offer services that meet high international standards.

"The technology used in both the cards and the phones is better than the older phones that worked only on coins," he said.

"The cards work on the basis of units that recede by use and the unused units are saved for later," he added.

He explained that very few of the JPP phones can be seen around the Kingdom, unlike those of their competitor Alo, because the JPP phones were mostly installed indoors, on univer-

sity campuses, and in hospitals, airports, and malls. He added that soon they will start to install outdoor booths as well.

Shadi Majali, general manager of the Trans Jordan for Communication Services Company, said Alo has so far installed 350 public pay phones in several areas in Amman, Madaba, and Aqaba, and by the end of 1998, 3,000 Alo phones will cover the entire Kingdom.

Mr. Majali said the service provided by Alo is cheaper than that of communication offices and the coin-operated phones, because phone cards charge for the actual length of the phone call, as opposed to a flat rate.

He added that such phones are also more convenient since they offer 24 hour access.

"The phones provide free emergency calls to the police, civil defence, traffic operations, and hospitals, he said.

A number of Jordanians seem to agree with the companies' claims of better service and greater flexibility.

"The phone service in Amman is a great idea.

They are easy to use and the service is better than the mobile and fast link services," said Samer Faraj, a businessman.

Amjad Masri, a driver, said the public phones are useful, since he has a pager and can stop his car at any place and make the necessary phone calls.

Several communication office owners, however, have expressed apprehension about the new phone services, which they fear will cost them their livelihood.

"The government should leave it to the public to decide on which service they prefer using, instead of closing our business," said a communication office owner who declined to give his name.

Another said the presence of the phones has affected his business.

"Nonetheless," he added, "I provide them with a more personal atmosphere. They can call abroad and receive calls from their families, and in times of winter and rain my indoor office would seem much better than the semi-covered phone booths."

Environmental project seeks to raise awareness, participation of youth

By Nadia Mukhlis
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A project entitled "Comprehensive Environmental Awareness Programme for School Children" was launched earlier this year to increase environmental knowledge among schoolchildren nationwide as part of an overall campaign to raise awareness in the community, according to Rana Naber, media committee spokesperson at the Friends of the Environment (FOE) society.

The project followed an agreement signed in August by FOE and the U.N. Development Project Global Environment Fund (GEF) and entails dealing with such topics as biodiversity, global warming, water, ozone depletion, and desertification, Ms. Naber said.

The project has additional goals, including increasing the participation of the young generation in environmental projects, highlighting GEF projects, and exposing students to the lat-

est technology and information available through the Internet and computer-aided dialogue, she added.

The activities to be carried out by the project will provide practical, action-oriented, hands-on experience for students, Ms. Naber stated.

The society will carry out all the organisation, administration, and promotion, advise students, discuss and review the results of projects, exchange of information between the students in Jordan and local and international experts, organise field trips to GEF sites, and facilitate computer data input, she said.

"The proposed visits to all GEF programmes in Jordan will be our primary objective. These projects include desertification control, monitoring emissions along highways, biodiversity awareness campaigns, conservation of the biodiversity of Petra, and coral reef rehabilitation research and conservation," she said.

Ms. Naber told the Jordan Times that the participants

comprise students between the ages of 16-18 from over 5,000 schools across the nation that have been nominated by the Ministry of Education.

"The creation of data base to strengthen the students' experiences and technical skills on the use of computers and networking in environmental issues is one of our major goals," Ms. Naber said.

All students will have the chance to utilise software that will be created for this purpose, she added.

The society will require funding to train teachers and students in the methods of conducting proper scientific studies, which involve data collection and the writing of technical proposals, she said.

"We aim to strengthen the ties between non-governmental organisations and communities that have received GEF funding to increase the overall awareness of the world's environmental needs," Ms. Naber concluded.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

* Annual Christmas bazaar, sponsored by Al Hussein Society for the Physically Handicapped, at the Amman Marriott Hotel on Tuesday, Dec. 16 at 10:30 a.m.

CONCERT

* Classical Arabic music by Iraqi band "Somer" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh at 7:00 p.m.

DIALOGUE

* "The Arab Renaissance Project" by Moroccan intellectual and thinker Dr. Mohammad Al Jabiri with the participation of Dr. Ahmad Madi, Dr. Salih Abu Ushe, Dr. Hisham Ghassib, and Ms. Muna Shugair at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* Baroque Music, Its Nature and Mode of

Effect" by Von Helmut Burkard at the National Music Conservatory at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings by Ghada Dahdaleh at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Dec. 20.

* Photo exhibition by Edgardo Rodriguez entitled "Arab Presence in Cuban Architecture" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 20.

* Plastic (abstract) art by Iraqi artist Dha Khazafi at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Dec. 18.

* Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

* "Journey Within" by Pakistani artist Gulgee and his son, sculptor Amin Gulgee, at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (Tel. 630128), until Dec. 15.

Accident in Irbid sends 5 to hospital

AMMAN (Petra) — Five people were admitted to Rosary Hospital in Irbid after sustaining injuries and fractures in an accident involving two vehicles, according to Civil Defence Department sources.

The sources added that another accident took place in Yadoudeh, south of Amman, causing several injuries and fractures to four people, who were reported to be in stable and fair condition.

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An Islamic scholar has thrown a wrench into the works of plans by a private group of individuals to set up breast milk banks in Jordan along Western lines, telling them it would introduce incest into the community.

Mahmoud Sartawi, head of the Shari'a (Islamic law) Faculty at the University of Jordan, said the proposed bank could only be allowed to operate under Islamic law if the source of the milk was known and did not get mixed with that from other donors.

Breast milk banks, functioning along the same lines as blood banks, are popular in Europe. They store breast milk donated by mothers free of charge to help infants who are sick, premature, or who cannot be breastfed by their mothers for different rea-

sons.

"This idea [Western-style breast milk banks] is not allowed in Islam," Dr. Sartawi told a recent seminar probing the controversial proposal.

According to Islamic law, two infants who are nourished by the same mother become "brothers and sisters through breastfeeding" and are therefore banned from getting married, Dr. Sartawi argued.

"For this reason, breast milk banks set up along Western lines are not allowed in Islam, because the source of milk remains unknown. This would have problematic implications for future marriages," he said.

His remarks put a damper on the major theme of the seminar on "trends and issues revolving around the establishment of breast milk banks in the Muslim World," held at the private-run Al Zaytoonah Uni-

versity last week.

"What if we know the origins of the breast milk at the proposed bank, label the bottles, and do not mix their contents? Would this still be considered haram (taboo) in Islam?" asked Wafiq Abdul Rahim, head of the nursing faculty at Al Zaytoonah University.

"In that case, we will not be falling into the trap of haram," Dr. Sartawi replied.

Intermarriage among first and second cousins is rampant in Jordan, prompting the government to introduce non-compulsory premarital medical tests as a precautionary move to determine if one of the couple carries a hereditary disease.

Most speakers at the seminar stressed the "tremendous benefits" of breastfeeding, an idea long encouraged in Islam.

"Breastfeeding was not only important for nutrition

purposes," said Al Zaytoonah University professor Amal Tal.

"It is also vital for psychological and emotional purposes, as it has helped lift the spirits of a lot of mothers suffering from chronic depression or stress," she explained.

Others said it helped pacify infants giving them added self-confidence and affection.

Islam, Dr. Sartawi said, did not only encourage breastfeeding, but also awarded women who helped breastfeed other children in the community in need of breast milk — provided the identity of the mother was known.

"Islam rewards foster mothers by considering the infant they breastfeed as a member of her family, which enlarges family circles and strengthens community ties," Dr. Sartawi told the Jordan Times.

Albright soft-pedals Libya row with South Africa

PRETORIA (R) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright Saturday soft-pedalled a dispute with South Africa over visits to Libya by President Nelson Mandela, but indicated the affair had not been forgotten.

"We did not find many disagreements and those that we have we talk about quietly," she said in reply to a question about the visits at a news conference after talks with South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

"We generally think that these are issues that are best handled in diplomatic channels."

Ms. Albright held a meeting later with Mr. Mandela, who stirred American displeasure by paying two visits to Libya last month and presenting an award to Libyan leader Muammar

Qadhafi. Washington says Tripoli sponsors terrorism, but Mr. Mandela has rejected the U.S. criticism of his trip, saying it was none of Washington's business.

One of the main reasons for U.S. reticence over the Libya dispute is Mr. Mandela's worldwide prestige as leader of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

"I stand in the presence of one of the giants of our century," Ms. Albright said after a 20-minute courtesy call on Mr. Mandela. "It was a great pleasure to meet with a man of such incredible wisdom."

"You are very kind to an old man," Mr. Mandela responded.

Despite statements by both Ms. Albright and Mr. Mbeki that differences were hard to find, Mr. Mbeki

made clear his government did not share the U.S. goal of isolating the Islamist rulers of Sudan and backing the opposition trying to overthrow them.

Ms. Albright, on a seven-nation African tour, stepped up pressure on Khartoum by meeting in Kampala Wednesday with Sudanese opposition leader John Garang.

Mr. Mbeki took a neutral line, noting that South Africa had been approached by both Mr. Garang and Sudanese President Omar Bashir over possible mediation.

"We want to encourage them to find a resolution to that particular question, to end that conflict," he said.

Ms. Albright and Mr. Mbeki agreed they wanted to see speedier implementation of a 1994 peace agreement in Angola, and to see a

successful move to democracy in Democratic Republic of the Congo, both countries that Ms. Albright has visited in the past two days.

Ms. Albright Friday warned Jonas Savimbi, leader of the Unita Angolan opposition group, that he risked being left behind if he continued to resist peace. "The people (in Angola) are ready for having a normal life," she said Saturday.

Mr. Mbeki, who is due to take over from Mr. Mandela next week as head of the African National Congress (ANC) party, and is expected to become president in 1999, said he was not planning major changes in foreign or domestic policy.

"There will not be a change of policy," he said. "The basic policy positions of the ANC I am certain will be maintained."

Kremlin wall of silence fuels Yeltsin health fears

MOSCOW (AFP) — Four days after his admission to a Moscow clinic with a "chill" Kremlin officials were tight-lipped Saturday about Boris Yeltsin's health, fuelling concerns the president was more seriously ill than officially admitted.

The official wall of silence came the day after a radio report — promptly denied by the Kremlin — that Mr. Yeltsin, who was admitted to the Barvikha clinic just west of Moscow Wednesday, had suffered a severe brain spasm.

A Kremlin spokesman contacted by AFP Saturday said "there is no information" on the 66-year-old president's health.

Mr. Yeltsin's admission to a sanatorium for 10-12 days sent share prices tumbling and sparked opposition calls to reduce the president's enormous powers.

A well-placed medical source told Moscow Echo radio that Mr. Yeltsin "had a severe spasm of the blood vessels in the brain, linked to sharp weather fluctuations and his general tiredness and overwork."

Western medical experts said such a complaint was "serious" and could cause haemorrhaging of the brain lining and restrict blood supplies to the brain.

Mr. Yeltsin's spokesman Sergei Yastrzhemsky said Wednesday that Yeltsin had an acute chest infection and a slight chill, and that doctors had advised Mr. Yeltsin, who underwent heart surgery in November 1996, to rest.

NTV television cited officials as saying that Mr. Yeltsin might take a stroll in the clinic

grounds later Saturday if his temperature remained normal. In Washington, the White House dismissed what it called "rumours" that Mr. Yeltsin was seriously ill and backed the Kremlin statements.

"We have seen the statements made by the Russian government and by the president's spokesman ... and are not aware of anything that leads us to believe that they are incorrect," spokesman Michael McCurry said.

However, the Kremlin's muteness recalled its economy with the truth last summer, when Mr. Yeltsin's heart-attack on the eve of his reelection was initially described as a "sore throat" and a "cold."

Since his admission to the clinic Wednesday, only brief pictures of Mr. Yeltsin have appeared on television, minus the soundtrack.

In footage shown on NTV Mr. Yeltsin appeared relaxed, wearing a cardigan over an open-necked shirt as he received presidential administration chief Valentin Yumashev in his private study.

But Mr. Yeltsin looked somewhat unsteady as he rose from his desk to greet Mr. Yumashev, and his right hand appeared to shake uncontrollably as he sat in an armchair talking to his aide.

Officials have still not yet confirmed that Mr. Yeltsin will vote Sunday in Moscow city elections, or whether journalists will be allowed to see him cast his vote in a special ballot box delivered to the clinic.

The Kremlin news blackout was aided by the long bank holiday weekend which meant no newspapers are published

until Monday, while the main midday news programme on Russia's second national television channel made no mention of the president's health.

"My feeling is that television is being given 'recommendations' to play down the story, and that in itself is, to me, significant," said Dmitri Trenin, analyst at the Moscow branch of the Carnegie Endowment.

Mr. Trenin said a prolonged Yeltsin absence from the Kremlin would send presidential hopefuls from the political establishment form alliances against outsiders like former Kremlin security chief Alexander Lebed and Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov.

"They would have to try and make someone who seems, to me at least, unelectable (Prime Minister Viktor Chornomyrdin, into a person who is electable."

Mr. Chornomyrdin, premier for the past five years and seen by Russia's ruling financial elite as no threat to their business interests, could emerge as a compromise establishment candidate, he said.

But the electorate would "not be voting for Mr. Chornomyrdin, they will be voting against destabilisation," which could follow the victory of a candidate untested at national level, Mr. Trenin said.

Andrei Pionkovsky, director of the Moscow Centre for Strategic Studies, said the latest Mr. Yeltsin health scare had caused "enormous political instability at exactly the wrong time, in the middle of a financial crisis while the clans in the ruling oligarchy are engaged in bitter in-fighting."

Yeltsin tells air force chief to quit — agencies

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin will make his air force chief step down but the Kremlin insisted this is because he turns 60 Sunday and not because of last week's Siberian air disaster, Russian news agencies said Saturday.

Independent sources said despite sub-zero overnight temperatures and heavy snow in the mountainous area, fierce clashes had erupted just 50 kilometres west of here.

"There has been an exchange of heavy and light weapons fire on the Jalrez frontline, but neither side appears to have made any gains," a Western aid worker

returning from the area reported. At Jalrez the fundamentalist Sunni Muslim Taliban are battling Hezb-i-Wahdat, a hardline and pro-Iranian Shiite faction which controls much of the now snow-bound central massif of the country.

Another aid worker added similar clashes had also taken place close to the Taliban town of Ghazni, 130 kilometres southwest of Kabul, but again no gains were reported for either side.

No further details or casualty figures were immediately available. With temperatures throughout Afghanistan

falling and with the usual harsh winter anticipated, military analysts see both sides jostling for strategic positions in which to pass the winter in relative comfort.

Hezb-i-Wahdat is a member of the anti-Taliban alliance, which also includes ethnic-Uzbek warlord Abdul Rushid Dostam and ousted Kabul government troops loyal to ex-president Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The Taliban, who control around two-thirds of the country including the capital Kabul, have vowed to impose a pure Islamic state on a country gripped by 18 years of civil war.

Rival Afghan factions clash as winter sets in

KABUL (AFP) — Clashes between Taliban forces and an opposition Shiite faction are intensifying west of the Afghan capital despite falling temperatures and heavy snow, sources told AFP Saturday.

Independent sources said despite sub-zero overnight temperatures and heavy snow in the mountainous area, fierce clashes had erupted just 50 kilometres west of here.

"There has been an exchange of heavy and light weapons fire on the Jalrez frontline, but neither side appears to have made any gains," a Western aid worker

Tibetan separatists becoming more active, says China

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese authorities have called for tougher action against Tibetan separatists whom they say are becoming more active and harder to control.

"The conflict between the separatists and the counter-separatists becomes more and more active and difficult," warned a front-page editorial in the Tibet Daily, received here Saturday.

"We have to continue resisting the disturbances. Fighting separatist activities is a long-term battle and is an important task for the Tibetan government," said the newspaper in its Dec. 4 issue.

China has ordered its campaign against the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, to be extended to all areas of Tibetan society to eliminate his influence.

Beijing's top officials in Tibet have in recent weeks increased their attacks on the Dalai Lama, culling

the fight against him a "matter of life or death." The 1989 Nobel Peace Prize winner, who lives in exile in northern India, fled Tibet in 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule.

"The Dalai Lama is the chief of the political gang seeking independence of the region," the editorial said.

"The Dalai Lama is the origin of the trouble in Tibet. He has not changed his counter-revolutionary nature. He will continue to oppose us and pursue these separatist activities of agitation," it added.

"We have to be vigilant and continue our patriotic education in the temples and in the rest of society."

"The firm fight against the Dalai Lama must be carried out in the education, cultural and religious domains. We should attack with force all separatist activities and disturbances."

China's recent crack-

Australia chooses its 100 Living National Treasures

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australia joined Japan Saturday to become only the second country to formally designate certain citizens as "living treasures."

The National Trust released a list of 100 Living National Treasures, nominated by the public through a three-month poll.

It includes many predictable names, such as cricket legend Sir Donald Bradman, opera star Dame Joan Sutherland and every prime minister of the past 25 years — except Labour stalwart Bob Hawke.

However, of the 100, only 30 are female.

It is dominated by people from the arts, sport and politics but is also notable for having 10 indigenous activists included, one of which is Faith Bandler, who this week received the 1997 Australian Human Rights Medal.

Nearly 10,000 ordinary Australians voted in the poll to choose who should be designated a Living National Treasure through "print media, spirited talk-back radio debate and word of mouth," the Trust said.

Longtime expatriates such as writer Robert Hughes, feminist Germaine Greer, and entertainers Rolf Harris and Barry Humphries show distance does not mean they are forgotten.

Sports stars on the list include golfer Greg Norman, track sprinter Cathy Freeman and swimming legend Dawn Fraser.

Other recipients include actress Judy Davis and authors Elizabeth Jolley and David Malouf.

Trust board member Michael Ball said the votes highlighted a varied and apolitical group of treasured fellow Australians who had achieved significant impact, with little restriction on gender, ethnicity, professional, political, sporting or spiritual differences.

"We believe Japan is the only country which formally designates certain citizens as 'living treasures' and these are selected by an appointed panel, not by the wider populace," Mr. Ball said in a statement.

"Australia's Living National Treasures are those whose significant and enduring contributions to our society and our total environment are experienced and acknowledged by all of us in our daily lives."

The designation of the 100 was a lifetime award and the trust planned a series of books and documentaries which would preserve the contributions they had made to Australian life.

They will be officially honoured at a dinner hosted by Prime Minister John Howard in Sydney next month.

Armenian Supreme Court jails opposition activists for treason

YEREVAN (AFP) — The head of Armenia's outlawed Dashnaksutun opposition party was jailed for four years and one of his followers was sentenced to death for treason in the trial of 20 opposition activists, which ended here Friday.

The court found the party's leader Vagan Ovanisian and his followers guilty of "calling for the violent overthrow of the constitutional system and for terrorist acts."

Three who were not members of Dashnaksutun were acquitted.

Although only Mr. Ovanisian and three others were members of the party, 12 defendants — all alleged associates of Mr. Ovanisian — were also jailed for terms ranging from three to seven years, and one — Tigran Avestissian — was sentenced to death for killing a policeman.

It was the last trial of detained Dashnaksutun activists and their supporters, and had lasted 18 months. Mr. Ovanisian and his associates were arrested in July 1995.

Last year Mr. Ovanisian staged a 10-day hunger strike in protest at his imprisonment.

Dashnaksutun was outlawed in December 1994 and branded a "terrorist organisation" by President Levon Ter-Petrosian.

The party is the oldest in Armenia and was banned by the Communists when the Caucasus republic was part of the Soviet Union. It was resurrected in 1991 and became one of the main opposition groups in independent Armenia.

Heathrow traffic near normal

LONDON (R) — Some flights from London's Heathrow Airport were still being delayed Saturday following a fire that broke out in the early hours of Friday morning, airport officials said.

The main problems were due to aeroplanes being in the wrong place because their flights had been cancelled after the fire swept through Terminal One.

"The airport is operating to

timetable, we have a near normal pattern of flights," a spokeswoman said. "If there are any delays, it's because a few aircraft are in the wrong place having had to stay on the ground yesterday," she said.

The volume of passenger traffic was heavier than usual for a Saturday because of the number of people whose flights were delayed from Friday. The fire, which broke out in a burger bar, caused the

cancellation of 307 flights, two-thirds of them British Airways services.

The terminal had been due to handle 600 flights Friday, carrying some 70,000 passengers. The fire damage is expected to cost thousands of pounds to repair, although safety experts said further destruction had been averted by a special fireproof membrane in the terminal roof which curbed the spread of the blaze.



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright stands with South African President Nelson Mandela during a news briefing at his Mahlabandlovo residence in Pretoria (Reuters photo)

Hong Kong government anti-bird flu actions too late — legislator

HONG KONG (R) — Authorities in the Chinese province of Guangdong have agreed to step up checks for a poultry flu that has killed two people and left two others critically ill in Hong Kong, a Hong Kong government official said Saturday.

But a legislator in the territory said Hong Kong should have acted earlier.

Neighbouring Guangdong provides the city with most of its chickens.

"Our counterparts in Guangdong fully understand our concerns and agree to step up surveillance," Leslie Wei, director of agriculture and fisheries, told government radio.

She said there was a need to ensure that poultry coming into Hong Kong from

China were free from the deadly H5N1 strain, which is normally confined to chickens.

Friday authorities said doctors had come up with three more suspected cases, which would bring the total number of people to have contracted the flu to seven, including the two who have died.

Two of the seven remain in a critical condition in hospital, government radio said Saturday.

Health investigators say there is no evidence to link the people who have contracted the disease in Hong Kong.

But some said the government's Department of Health (DH) needed to keep people better informed and should have acted earlier to check the flu's spread.

"I think there is no doubt the Department of Health is now doing its best to locate the source of the flu," said Leong Che-Hung, vice-chairman of the Provisional Legislature's Health Panel.

"But the work they do is not open enough. It would be much better to tell people where they're at. Every day they say there is nothing to worry about, then they announce three more cases," he said.

Mr. Leong said he was disappointed the agriculture and fisheries department had not addressed the issue of chicken flu in China earlier.

"Many months ago, there were reports of chicken diseases in China. The Agriculture and Fisheries Department should have taken a look at it as soon as

possible," he said. "At the slightest suspicion that a cold is not proceeding normally see a doctor," he said.

But doctors could not admit every person they examined for the flu as hospitals would be bursting at the seams, he added.

In response to the health scare, Hong Kong consumers are eating less chicken, officials figures showed Friday.

Local and U.S. medical experts have confirmed the H5N1 virus originated in birds, but said they did not know how it was passed to humans.

Hong Kong officials said last week it was possible the virus could spread worldwide, and Japan has said it would consider banning poultry imports.

S. African Neo-Nazis regret, but chief defiant

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa's Neo-Nazi Afrikaner resistance movement (AWB) has expressed regret for past excesses but their bearded leader Eugene Terre Blanche was quoted Saturday as saying he had nothing to do with the apology.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, aimed at healing the wounds of the racially divided past, said Friday the AWB had sent a statement of regret for its "human rights violations and racism since its inception in 1973." But

Terre Blanche said he and his leading AWB "generals" knew nothing about the submission, signed by a Brigadier Dries Kriel, who said the AWB had committed 35 acts of sabotage over the years.

Estonia eyes fast track EU membership

LUXEMBOURG (R) — Estonia said Saturday it hoped to be one of the first countries from Central and Eastern Europe to join the European Union.

Foreign Minister Toomas Ilves said, however, the tiny Baltic state accepted it would not join the EU until the next century.

Financial television. Estonia's banking industry was the probably the best in East Europe and "probably better than some (EU) member states."

Mr. Ilves said Estonia also aimed to become a fully fledged member of the EU's Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) at the same time as it joined the bloc.

tion for fast-track EU membership talks could lead to a split with Baltic neighbours Latvia and Lithuania.

Judge orders California marijuana clubs closed

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — A state appeals court here ruled that marijuana clubs must close because they cannot legally sell the plant to sick patients despite an initiative approved by voters authorising the sale.

San Francisco cooperative known as the Cannabis Buyer's Club.

Decision on Marcos money opens way for more claims

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AFP) — After years in which Swiss banking secrecy made Switzerland a haven for dubious rulers of all manner of countries, it is payback time, Swiss officials said Friday.

The Swiss Supreme Court ruling Friday that two Swiss banks must return to the Philippines up to \$500 million stolen by late dictator Ferdinand Marcos will open the way to the return of money owed to other countries, Swiss officials said.

In September, after six years of court procedure, Bern for the first time ever ordered the repayment of \$2.6 million to Mali. It determined that the money had been stolen by former president Moussa Traore.

The Swiss court ruling Thursday declared that under a law in effect since February this year it is the "general rule" that funds to be returned there had first to be a binding court ruling from the country demanding the money.

Chechenya to honour Red Cross dead on anniversary

GROZNY, Russia (R) — Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov will bestow posthumous honours on six foreign Red Cross workers murdered in Chechenya a year ago next week, a presidential spokesman told reporters Saturday.

to withdraw last year after 21 months of fighting, blamed secret groups loyal to Moscow for trying to disrupt a fragile peace. Russian special forces denied any involvement.

Clinton wishes Sinatra a happy birthday

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — President Bill Clinton Friday wished veteran crooner Frank Sinatra a happy birthday as the entertainer turned 82.

he continues to smoke "a little bit." Last January Sinatra suffered a heart attack. He has not been seen in public since.



Tina (left), and Nancy Sinatra as they are interviewed on CNN's 'Larry King Live' for a tribute to their father Frank Sinatra in Los Angeles (Reuter photo)

Hearings into TWA Flight 800 end with call for greater jet fuel safety

BALTIMORE, Maryland (AFP) — A week of public hearings on the TWA Flight 800 disaster ended here Friday with an urgent call to make jet fuel vapour less likely to explode on board.

in the case of TWA 800, a serious problem is uncovered," Mr. Hall said.

bility of explosions in fighter planes.

the French victims, Guy-Michel Ney said the sessions had furnished "the necessary elements" for a criminal negligence suit against Boeing and the FAA.

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Vision vs brutality

JORDAN'S VULNERABLE economy could suffer severely if a crisis with Iraq sparked by Baghdad's hanging of four Jordanians ruptures wide-ranging trade ties, Jordanian businessmen and officials were quoted by an international news agency as saying on Thursday.

"Jordan's energy needs are paid for by goods worth only \$250 million, in a lucrative deal which secures a captive market for its goods and helps keep Jordanian jobs while activating idle factory capacity, a real bonus for an economy in recession," the news agency said.

It went on to quote economists as saying that "no one can beat Iraq's terms for supplying 75,000 barrels per day of crude oil and products, for which oil-rich exporting countries like Saudi Arabia would charge Amman market prices," in implicitly warning that Jordan risked big losses if it reacted in tune with national pride lines over the execution of the four Jordanian nationals in Iraq.

While some of us may want to appreciate this or any other news agency's concern over what might happen to Jordan if the Kingdom sought to ignore economics in defence of its citizens' rights, the vast majority of Jordanians would no doubt appreciate more what His Majesty the King told parliamentarians yesterday in this regard.

Jordan was subjected to many economic and political pressures before, yet we managed to cope; each time the country faced a crisis it took the challenge and survived even stronger than before.

His Majesty even cited the time when the country stood up to the U.S. and its allies over the Gulf crisis and war, specifically to defend the cause of Iraq and Arab rights. Since then, the King said, Jordan came back to enjoy the best relations it ever had with the U.S.

The lesson that can be drawn from this is that while Jordan does not seek confrontation with the Iraqi regime or any other, it is not going to serve merely as a witness when the rights and lives of Jordanian citizens are threatened and taken away, no matter how high the price we have to pay.

In the case of Iraq, whose people's cause Jordan has fought for and will continue to defend, it is a question of how far the rulers in Baghdad can go in abusing human rights and trampling on democracy and political pluralism whether it is the rights of the Iraqis themselves, of Jordanians, of other Arabs which are trampled on, a new and serious effort has to be made in order to put an end to the brutal and savage practices that are committed in the name of law and order everyday.

On its own, Jordan cannot change the dark reality that exists in Iraq today. But this country can, as the reaction to the hanging of four of our countrymen has amply demonstrated, rise in unison to show strength and determination in the face of injustice, criminality and disrespect for human norms and human lives.

Major powers can likewise show wisdom and resolve in dealing with the situation in Iraq. The regime of sanctions, the dual containment policy, the other hitherto used tools, namely those that have emphasised the search for hidden weapons over the legitimate human needs and aspects of the Iraqi people have not brought us any closer to salvaging Iraq and rehabilitating it in the civilised comity of nations. New, creative policies have to replace older methods in dealing with Iraq.

Not so long ago, the U.S. used the threat of force to restore democracy in Haiti — and not to strike at lifeline targets of the Haitian people. Why can't a similar strategy be adopted here in this region? What is needed is not new threats to Iraq's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. Such threats are, unfortunately, abundant in policies being adopted on Iraq today. What is needed are new directions and vision to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people within the same parameters that the U.N. has set in dealing with Iraq.

In the end the U.N.'s goals in and over Iraq will be attained at the same time the Iraqis get rid of their present-day agonies.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour's Oreib Rintawi Saturday said that in light of the dastardly crime committed against four Jordanian citizens in Iraq, one can not blame truck drivers if they call for boycotting Iraq and one can not blame Jordanians for harbouring hatred towards the Iraqi regime. The Iraqis ignored all pleas to spare the lives of the four Jordanians who were accused of smuggling auto spare parts and disregarded all that Jordan has done to help the Iraqi people since the imposition of the sanctions in 1990, said the writer. He said Jordanians do not condone acts of smuggling but they also do not execute persons who may have been discovered with smuggled goods in their cars. A great number of Iraqi nationals living in Jordan have committed many offences since they arrived in Jordan, fleeing the present situation in Iraq, but the Jordanian authorities did not sentence them to death, the writer noted. He said if the Iraqi action was most regrettable, especially at a time when Jordanian newspapers are full of articles expressing solidarity with Iraq and demanding an end to the sanctions.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Debt service 1998 — An economic burden

ACCORDING TO the draft budget of 1998, interest which the treasury has to pay during the coming year will be JD 19.8 million to local creditors and JD 233.6 million (\$330m) to external creditors, i.e., a total of JD 253.4 million, equal to 12.8 per cent of the whole budget, or 4.1 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) supposed to reach JD 6.111 billion in 1998 in current market prices. These interest payments form a major part of the current expenditure in the budget.

The principal amounts due on loans, and payable during 1998 include JD 7.3 million to domestic lenders and JD 254.5 million (\$360m) to foreign creditors, i.e., a total of JD 261.8 million forming 13.2 per cent of the total volume of the 1998 budget, or 4.3 per cent of GDP.

Therefore, the total debt service, principal and interest, will consume 26 per cent of the central government budget or 8.4 per cent of GDP, a huge and heavy burden on the budget, the taxpayers, and

the national economy in general.

In other words Jordan will repay all interest due in cash from the tax proceeds. Repayment of principal amounts, however, will be financed by fresh borrowing, or debt roll-over, which is the natural way of repaying debt everywhere.

Above figures indicate that the overall outstanding indebtedness of the Jordanian treasury will rise during 1998 by a net amount of JD37 million representing net borrowing in excess of repayment of principal amounts.

Since the internal public debt will be reduced by JD7.3 million, external public debt will rise by JD44.3 million or \$62 million.

Although the external indebtedness of Jordan will rise a little bit in absolute figures during 1998, it will actually be reduced relative to the growing size of the economy measured by GDP, which is estimated to rise by at least 8 per cent in current prices, of which 3 per cent represent inflation and 5 per cent

represent real growth.

The ratio of external debt to GDP by the end of 1998 will be just below 85 per cent. This is a reasonable ratio if compared to the ratio recorded eight years ago (above 200 per cent) yet it remains rather high according to the taste of foreign investors who don't like to see external debt in a host country above 75 per cent of GDP.

Jordan's external indebtedness is a big problem which no one expects to be solved overnight. It takes time, austerity, and high growth. What counts is that the problem is now under control, thanks to the strict adherence to the International Monetary Fund economic programme.

Finally we should note that 1998 may be the last year of rescheduling availability as all amounts due on 1999 and beyond are not eligible for rescheduling, either because they were rescheduled before, or because they relate to loans withdrawn after the cut-off date of 1/1/1989.

The Kyoto Protocol: Too little, too fast

By Gwynne Dyer

DO YOU want it good, or do you want it now?

At one point this week, when the marathon 160-country talks in Kyoto on a global warming treaty were heading into overtime, one of the 9,000 exhausted diplomats, campaigners and journalists at the event begged Raul Estrada Oyuela, the Argentine conference chairman, to set a final deadline. "The deadline," Estrada murmured into the mike. "It is the end of the world, now."

If that's the question, then Kyoto's answer was spectacularly inadequate. The 'Kyoto Protocol' to the 1992 Climate Change Treaty will not even slow the rate at which 'greenhouse gases' are accumulating in the atmosphere. It is not a good treaty, and some argue that we should not settle for a bad one just to have it now.

To begin with, the target over which the eleven days of haggling took place was far too low. The focus was on whether the 38 industrialised countries would get back down to their 1990 emission level for carbon dioxide and other major greenhouse gases, or 5 per cent below it, or 10 per cent, or 15 per cent — as though the 1990 level was a reasonable benchmark.

But it wasn't. It was a wildly dangerous and irresponsible level that was the result of over a century of uncontrolled industrialisation in Europe, North America and Japan. It means billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases accumulate in the atmosphere every year. It doesn't 'stabilise' anything.

Nine of the world's 10 warmest recorded years have been since 1983, and this year was the warmest ever. Four British scientists who were lead authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report to the Kyoto meeting recently published estimates that the difference between a complete failure to agree at Kyoto and agreement on the most radical reductions (the Brazilian proposal for 30 per cent cuts) would be minuscule.

By the year 2050, they calculated, the gap between the worst-case and best-case outcomes at Kyoto would only account for a difference of between 1.4 and 1.2 degrees Centigrade (2.5 and 2.1 degrees Fahrenheit) in the total amount that the planet warms up.

They even calculated how many lives might be saved by the best outcome. It isn't many. "If by trying to curb global warming, Kyoto removes 4 million people from the risk of hunger and 3 million from the risk of flooding," asked Mike Hulme of the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, "who is going to address the plight of the remaining 18 or 20 million who will suffer these impacts of climate change whatever Kyoto might achieve?"

In the end, the great majority of industrialised countries settled for cuts of between 6 and 8 per cent (though Australia got an 8 per cent rise, and Iceland 10 per cent — the collective average cut is only 5.2 per cent). And none of these emission cuts, marginal as they are, come into effect for 11 years: the signatories are only obliged to reach their targets between 2008 and 2012.

Moreover, the United States, against bitter opposition, demanded and got a clause on "emissions trading" that will let it "buy up" any reductions that other countries make beyond their allotted targets, and apply them against its own quota. This is the perfect loophole. The industrial collapse in former Soviet-bloc countries since 1990 has resulted in huge involuntary cuts in their greenhouse gas emissions (28 per cent in Russia's case). So they can now sell their right to pollute up to the 1990 level to countries like the United States, Canada, Japan and Australia that want to go on expanding their emissions.

In theory, at least, the U.S. could buy enough emission rights to meet the 2012 target without even having to cut its current 3 per cent annual growth in emissions. It would simply buy in the pollution rights of other players — and since it would be the only major customer, the rights ought not be too expensive.

Small wonder that Selwyn Gummer, environment minister in the former Conservative government in Britain, lost it completely near the end of the Kyoto conference. "We are not talking about piddling trade negotiations over the price of beans here," he raged. "We are talking about...whether Bangladesh and 36 small island states disappear beneath the sea. We are talking about the richest nation in the world playing games with the lives of the poorest."

Well, yes, but the poor aren't being very responsible either. It's all very well to blame the industrialised countries for most of the current problem, but if you

share a sinking lifeboat with them, you should probably help with the bailing. The flat refusal of developing countries to accept any emission controls is as wrong-headed as the 95-0 vote in the U.S. Senate earlier this year rejecting any climate change treaty that doesn't force them to.

"What we have here is not ratifiable in the Senate in my judgement," said U.S. Senator John Kerry, an environmental advocate who was present in Kyoto, and in fact President Bill Clinton is not likely to submit it for ratification any time soon. Critical issues like enforcement and the rules for trading emissions credits have been left to a follow-on conference in Argentina next November. So was Kyoto worth all the trouble and expense? Yes.

As with the 1988 Montreal Protocol on the ozone layer, review conferences will tighten the emissions targets and deadlines. The developing countries will inevitably be drawn in by the cunning provision that only those countries that set voluntary limits can take part in emissions trading and "joint implementation" (where industrialised countries pay for cleaning up industry in developing nations in return for credits on their own emissions targets).

The Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels got it dead right. "A preoccupation with targets overlooks the real meaning of Kyoto," said CEPS researcher Christian Egenhofer. "The real importance of Kyoto is that it marks a change of paradigm. The period of ever-increasing greenhouse gas emissions is definitely over, and we enter a phase of reduction."

Orange juice at issue

By Shada Islam

BRUSSELS — The European Union's (EU) relations with Israel have hit another low but, this time, not over politics. EU policy-makers have no illusions about Prime Minister Netanyahu's lack of commitment to the Oslo accords and remain opposed to his policy of Israeli settlements on Arab lands. Their fight with Israel for the moment, however, is about orange juice, not the Middle East peace process.

EU officials have accused Israel of deliberately flouting the rules of origin included in a free trade pact signed by the two sides in 1995. EU trade experts say they have "well founded" doubts about the validity of certain certificates of origin delivered by the Israeli authorities for exports of orange juice and other products to the European market. All European importers of Israeli produce have been warned of EU fears that Israeli orange juice manufacturers are mixing local juice with concentrate imported from Brazil and the United States in violation of the free trade agreement.

Under the terms of the free trade deal, Israeli products get duty-free access to the EU market, provided they meet certain strict rules on the national origin of goods. The EU says its investigators have discovered evidence that Israel is flouting these rules by using a high percentage of foreign inputs and then passing off the products as wholly "made in Israel."

The European Commission has warned

importers that they could end up paying up to \$45 million in fines if they purchase Israeli goods on the basis of these certificates.

"There are shortcomings in the Israeli system for controlling the origin of goods," an EU official commented, adding that the Israeli authorities had also shown a lack of cooperation with Brussels on the issue. A special meeting of the EU-Israel cooperation council was called on November 28 to discuss the problem.

[European] Union officials do not deny that their patience with Israeli policies has worn extremely thin.

Not surprisingly, Israel has accused the EU of mixing business and politics. "This is a commercial issue which they have inflated into a political issue," said Zohar Peri, director of trade administration in Israel's ministry for trade and industry. "There is an irrelevant political element to this. Maybe they're doing this to impress the Arabs that they are pressuring Israel."

Union officials do not deny that their patience with Israeli policies has worn extremely thin. But they insist that the rules-of-origin quarrel is being dealt with on its own merits. "We've had our doubts about the validity

of Israeli export certificates for a long-time now," one official commented. "This is a question of non-discrimination. Everyone has to respect internationally agreed trade rules."

Meanwhile, the 15 EU governments have also been trying to harness support for their "code of good conduct" for Israeli-Palestinian relations. Luxembourg's foreign minister, Jacques Poos, who is also the current president of the Council of Ministers, visited Israel and a number of Arab countries on November 10-14 to promote the code as well as underline the EU's hopes of reinforcing its political presence in the region. The aim of the code is to safeguard what has been achieved so far in the peace process and to introduce "confidence-building measures" on both sides.

Much to the EU's dismay, Israeli-Arab ill-feeling has spilled over into the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue launched in Barcelona in November 1995. Morocco has cancelled a meeting of Euro-Mediterranean industry ministers which was scheduled for Rabat at the end of October. Although no official explanation has been provided, Moroccan officials made it clear that a number of Arab delegations were not prepared to meet Israeli government representatives within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue. The EU is hoping to reconvene the meeting, but no dates have been set.

Middle East International

LETTERS

'Silencing ordinary voices'

To the Editor:

I AM WRITING with regards to Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh's misleading and disturbing commentary on freedom of expression ("Exercising freedom of expression takes competence," Jordan Times, Dec. 11-12). The article, I think, is a testimony to the enduring and outdated belief in Jordan that freedom of expression must be controlled, monitored, and that only certain types of "educated" people should have the upper hand in criticising and in voicing an opinion. This has come to be used, time and time again, in Jordan, with ulterior motives, to silence the voices of the "ordinary man" in the street.

The architects of Western democracy, which has proven, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that it holds many freedoms and rights which are desperately lacking in other areas of the world, particularly our neck of the woods (the Middle East), like Mill and Jefferson, contend that the only means to find the truth would be to allow everybody to voice an opinion. In many historical cases, it was the opinion of the man in the street that made the difference and that resulted in constructive change, and not that of the academe or the exalted philosopher.

Dr. Majdoubeh's article is rife with inaccuracies and misinterpretations, which are cushioned to further his regressive argument. His 'facts' are distorted. He says "that there is hardly any serious political, economic or social matter of public concern which one cannot tackle." I wonder how many people honestly believe this to be true. I have published several articles and letters in the Jordan Times, and every time, I have some subtle changes made either by myself or by the newspaper because they are "inappropriate." Until when do we have to continue the process of lying to ourselves, of indulging in false pride? I recognize the strides made in Jordan, but we have to continue criticism, and for us to reach the higher goals we seek, of a truly democratic society which rewards

merit and which is open to criticism from all sides.

Dr. Majdoubeh and others like him qualify their assertions by readily comparing Jordan to surrounding countries. As has been noted by many critics (I shall not name anybody in particular), we should compare ourselves with countries that have succeeded in fermenting true democracy and freedom of speech and not countries where critics are chastised and where there lurks a rule of iron-repressive law. The continual refusal to compare ourselves to more successful forms of democracy, is indicative, I believe of wounded pride, of a traditional skepticism and envy from Western cultural values. It is no excuse to say "well, we have a better democracy than the one in Syria" for the flaws that exist in our system.

Another avenue the author visits is the alleged nature of those who criticise and who yearn for greater democracy, as being either "nihilistic" and "dictatorial" or those who do not "have the skill to communicate or express themselves." This is offensive and misleading jargon, and is hauntingly similar to the days of the McCarthy witchhunts in America during the 1950s when almost anybody was described as a "communist." Of course, the tide of history turned against McCarthy, and now America has lived up to many of its constitutional freedoms. Similar to McCarthy, Dr. Majdoubeh would describe anybody who criticises as either a nihilist or uneducated. I am neither a nihilist, I am not uneducated, and I want greater freedom: so described thousands of Jordanians. I realise that there are many writers who lack the "sophistication" or "skill" to effectively express, but it is wrong to hold that against them. The real flaws lie in a government educational system which does not encourage discussion and freedom of expression. To blame the students and the writers is pure malice.

Marwan Hanania
Cornell University

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

King says Jordan faces most difficult circumstances, asks Parliamentarians to face upcoming challenges

(Continued from page 1)

for the Parliament to address," added the King.

Referring to the term he used in his Speech from the Throne that the Palestinian capital should be "in Jerusalem," the King said: "If we go back to the original U.N. resolutions on the partitioning of Palestine, the city should have been internationalised. But we have salvaged the Holy City of Jerusalem through our army who offered martyrs in and around the city. At the time there was an objection regarding the partitioning of the city because it was to include east Jerusalem and the walled city. So we said the partition should involve west as well as east Jerusalem."

He said: "Jerusalem remains in our minds and our conscience and hearts day and night and Al Hussein Ben Ali lies buried in Al Aqsa where the late King Abdullah fell as martyr along with the other Jordanian martyrs who defended the city. Ours is not a direct responsibility for Jerusalem but this does not absolve us from honouring our duty towards the city because we don't want to leave a vacuum for others to exploit, particularly Israel. In the peace treaty with Israel there is a certain provision for Jordan's role in the holy city."

Referring to the present status of Jerusalem, he said the city is now covering a very large area of land equal to one-fifth of the whole West Bank.

"So when we say the cap-

ital of the Palestinians in Jerusalem, we mean it should be in Jerusalem proper because the city has been occupied territory since 1967 and should be returned to its owners. We do not accept a Jerusalem on another site," said the King.

The King added: "The holy places should be open for the followers of the three monotheistic religions and there must be a system to guarantee the rights of all, otherwise it will be a source of more wars in the future. Jordan will do its best to help the Palestinians to regain their rights and to establish their independent state with their capital in Jerusalem."

The King stressed that Jordan will continue to assume its responsibility of caring for the holy places, expressing hope that the Palestinians will reach the stage when they exercise this right.

Referring to Jordan's relations with Israel, the King said Jordan has regained its right in lands and water resources through a peace treaty.

"Now we are in a position to strongly and logically address the Israelis and the Jewish community in the U.S. and elsewhere. I can say they listen to us and share with us the concern over the adamant Israeli stands and Israel's disregard of its commitment to the peace process especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track," pointed the King.

Referring to the Israeli society, King Hussein said: "They face the same problem and they have similar

aspirations but the mistakes come from those who are narrow-minded and who have no regard for future generations and this is a cause for danger because it might lead to an explosion. The majority of people are using their common sense. Unless this problem is solved, the danger will not affect only this part of the world but the whole world."

The King warned that the Middle East including Israel could be transformed into an arsenal of mass-destruction weapons, any mistake would bring this region to its end.

King Hussein said that Jordan faced many challenges and difficulties in the past few years and he recalled that in 1990 Jordan was in confrontation with the United States and the U.S. led coalition against Iraq in order to avert the disaster which had befallen the region and the war which followed the occupation of Kuwait.

He said that Jordan is still trying to overcome the consequences of the Gulf crisis for which it had paid a heavy price.

King Hussein criticised Jordanian papers which continually attack the U.S. and said that "our rights can be regained through dialogue and reason and not by offending others."

He said: "Jordan is about to receive U.S. fighter planes and has already received shipments of weapons and the debts to the United States had been cancelled. We have to admit that the U.S. is helping us to shoulder our

responsibilities towards building our nation."

He added that Jordan's affiliation to the NATO alliance gives it an opportunity to obtain modern weapons and military expertise at reduced prices.

"If we curse others and offend their feelings what will we gain? There are those who try to ruin our relations with the others so that we cannot progress and develop. The U.S. is the sole superpower and it is in our interest to have it on our side rather than against us," stressed the King.

Referring to the press in Jordan, he said: "Parliament has to discuss the status of the press and journalism in Jordan. It is regrettable that our press has damaged our relations with the Arab World and they had exploited freedom and democracy. At one point we felt that some groups were intent on destroying this democracy."

The King warned Parliament that there are many issues at hand that should be addressed and closely dealt with and that the country requires serious efforts to solve these problems, citing the problems of drug-addiction and crime.

Referring to the Islamic conference in Tehran, he said the meeting has opened a new chapter of Islamic inter-relations.

The King also voiced Jordan's appreciation for the release of two Jordanian prisoners of war, saying that Iran has taken a noble and honourable stand in freeing the prisoners.

Cabinet expected to win House confidence after scrutiny on draft laws

(Continued from page 1)

obtain its vote of confidence," deputy Hamadah Fara'neh (Amman) told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Fara'neh, who said he plans to vote for the government, added that he expects 40-50 deputies to vote in favour of the 24-member Cabinet. The debate, to open today, is seen by deputies as the first real chance for them to flex their muscles before their eager constituents, they said.

Other deputies will use the debate to quash widespread popular contention that the Parliament is a rubber stamp because of its current composition — 64 tribal leaders and pro-government figures.

House Speaker Sa'd Hayel Srour is trying to limit the duration of speakers' speeches to five minutes each to end the debate in two to three days. But many deputies were unhappy because they say the allocated time is too short for them to express their concerns.

Dr. Majali, who took over in March while the House was in recess, has been at loggerheads with the Islamist-led opposition that boycotted the elections. The Islamic Action Front (IAF), political arm of the powerful Muslim Brotherhood movement, and eight political parties boycotted this year's ballot in protest at what they said was a steady erosion of parliamentary authority under successive governments.

Many opposition figures and politicians fear that the legislation that the government intends to present to Parliament would further curb public freedoms. His Majesty King Hussein renewed his confidence in Dr. Majali in a letter he sent him on Dec. 4. In the letter, which focused on Jordan's position on the peace process, the King hailed the prime minister's leadership skills and his role in conducting free and democratic elections — a main point held against the Cabinet by its vocal opposition.

The Nov. 4 elections were the second supervised by Dr. Majali in his capacity as prime minister.

When Dr. Majali presented his first government to Parlia-

ment in 1993, 41 out of the present 79 deputies gave him confidence. 29 withheld it and nine abstained.

According to the Constitution, only when an absolute majority of 41 deputies deny the Cabinet their vote of confidence, would the government fall. In that case, the King can either appoint a new prime minister or ask the same prime minister to form a new government.

Dr. Majali, who has been put between a rock and a hard place several times, was criticised in 1993 for passing the provisional Election Law, and this year for amending the Press and Publications Law, which sparked a heated debate on Wednesday when the law was presented to the House.

Jordan wants ties with Iran based on respect, dialogue amongst nations — Crown Prince

(Continued from page 1)

cooperation with the Islamic World.

"We will respond to every positive step with a positive one."

Jordan does not have strong links with organisations hostile to the Iranian regime and does not maintain any relation with Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, he said.

Asked if Jordan plans to mediate between the U.S. and Iran, Prince Hassan said: "We have not contemplated such an idea, but I want to stress here that Jordan has refused the (U.S.) policy of dual containment which is directed at Iraq and Iran because it is pointless."

"Our relations with the U.S.

and the West are based on the concept that engagement in dialogue does not mean endorsement of the other party's stands."

Responding to a question about the OIC summit resolution on Jerusalem that paid tribute to His Majesty King Hussein's efforts in restoring the holy places of Jerusalem, Prince Hassan said: "We do not demand thanks for our duty. But here we are talking about the third restoration of the Dome of the Rock and the continuation of the task which was started by Al Hussein Ben Ali upon his departure from Mecca for exile, who held to his principle of granting self-determination to the Arab people."

"At the time, there was no such concept as the Palestinian people, in contemporary sense, that was at the end of the World War I."

"We are talking about a certain leader who led the renaissance movement, and who was exiled and whose body is now lying in rest in Al Aqsa. We are talking about the founder of the Kingdom, the late King Abdullah Ben Ali Hussein who led the Arab Army. We are talking about the martyrs of the Arab Army in Jerusalem."

"The time has come for us to work for the future on solid principles. It is not too much for Jordan's martyrs to be appreciated neither is it too much for the King of Jordan to be accredited for his achieve-

ments."

Asked if Jordan has any political ambition in Jerusalem, the Crown Prince said: "Jerusalem served as the political capital of Palestine, and the city accounts for one fifth of the whole area of the occupied territories. But we view Jerusalem as a dear part of Palestine."

Referring to relations with the Palestinians, Prince Hassan noted that "Palestine imports from Israel 240 times more than it imports from Jordan, but we have kept the bridges open with the occupied lands because their closure could result in depriving the Palestinians of the option of looking towards dealing with Arab countries, which means leaving the Palestinians at the mercy of the Israeli occupation."

"Jordan has a special relationship with the Palestinians and we hope that the occupation will end and that an independent Palestinian state will be established on Palestinian soil."

In reply to a question on whether Jordan plans to undertake certain measures against Iraq in retaliation for the execution of four Jordanian accused of smuggling, Prince Hassan said: "There is a great deal of disgust at present especially after the two countries had had a strong relationship and since Jordan has served as a natural conduit for Iraqis to reach the outside world geographically and

politically."

Referring to the plight of the Iraqis under the sanctions, he said: "We feel with utmost bitterness the sufferings of more than 26 per cent of the Iraqi people who face problems of poverty and lack of food."

"We demand that the human rights of the Iraqis be respected and that the weapon of sanctions and siege should not be employed to inflict collective torture. Our objection on the siege to Iraq also applies to the siege imposed on Iran, Libya and Sudan."

Prince Hassan further noted that the Jordanian people are dismayed and disgusted at the execution.

"We have expressed ourselves clearly to the Iraqi government that its actions are totally unacceptable, especially as Jordanian detainees have been in Iraqi jails for a very long time."

Asked whether Jordan proposed a federation in Iraq as a solution to the Iraqi crisis, Prince Hassan said: "We have not suggested any federation but we hope to see respect in Iraq for political pluralism within the framework of a Kurdish Arab identity and respect of Shiites' rights."

"In our view, this concept should be applied in the whole region if it seeks to widen the base of participation in decision making and enhance freedom."

OIC summit opens new chapter in Iranian-Jordanian relations

(Continued from page 1)

visiting Jordan shortly, although no date has yet been set, Dr. Tarawneh said. In the immediate future, the two countries will implement a trade agreement signed over two months ago and will open talks on operating direct air links between the two capitals.

Jordanian-Iranian relations have been tense since the Islamist revolution that toppled Shah Reza Pahlavi, once a close ally of Jordan. Opposing political positions on major regional issues such as the 1980-88 Iraq-Iran war, and the Arab-Israeli peace process, have further clouded ties.

Bilateral ties were suspended in 1980 after Amman announced its support for Iraq in its war against Iran. Diplomatic contacts were resumed in 1991, but since have remained minimal and, at times, tense. Tehran's strong opposition to the Middle East peace process, and its alleged funding of terrorism in the region, have compelled Amman to take a cautious political stand towards the Islamic Republic since the resumption of bilateral ties six years ago.

Analysts, however, are quick to point out that after Jordan signed its peace treaty with the Jewish state in 1994, Tehran did not cut diplomatic relations with Amman, despite its ideological opposition to peace making with the Jewish State.

They attributed this to Tehran's understanding of Amman's strategic need to

make peace with its Jewish neighbour.

In talks with Iranian officials, and in public meetings, Crown Prince Hassan stressed the need for Iran and other Arab and Muslim countries to "respect the particularities of each state, as well as the concept of non-interference, in accordance with international norms of behaviour," said a source — a request which the Iranians accepted, he added.

"In meetings with His Royal Highness, Mr. Khamenei and Mr. Khatami expressed their utmost desire in improving relations, with full acceptance of differences in policies," said the source.

According to officials, the Jordanian delegation particularly welcomed Iran's condemnation of terrorism and its stated commitment to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, that were included in the Tehran Declaration.

Tehran's approval of these two principles — major concerns of Jordanian and Arab leaders — is taken to signal a change in Iran's modus operandi in the region, analysts maintained.

The officials and analysts, however, said they sensed a marked change in Tehran's policy towards the peace process in general.

Privately, they said, senior Iranian officials demonstrated a surprising acceptance of Arab-Israeli reconciliation — a move certain to bring Iran closer to the Arab world, and ease its relations with the West.

Moreover, while Iranian officials publicly stressed

that the Islamic Republic would not sign peace with Israel, one official told the Jordan Times that, in private, some Iranian officials went as far as saying that they would drop their opposition to the peace process altogether, if it proved to be in Iran's interest.

Iran's three-year presidency of the OIC is also bound to contribute to moderating Tehran's position vis-a-vis the Arab-Israeli peace process to reflect the overall position of member states — many of whom have established some form of contact with Israel since the launch of the Middle East peace process in Madrid 1991, officials predict.

Interestingly, however, while publicly welcoming Iran's gradual acceptance of Arab-Israeli peace-making, some officials implicitly see the benefit in Iran's staunch stand against Israeli policies, viewing it as a leverage and a balancing tool.

However, despite Tehran's new commitment to non-interference and its implicit acceptance of the peace process, Amman will remain "on guard," until it is provided with sufficient proof of a change of heart, officials and analysts said.

Other Arab officials were quoted by international news agencies as saying that full reconciliation between Iran and the Arabs is "still some way off."

Collective Arab rapprochement with Iran, however, is likely to ease improvement of relations between Jordan and the Islamic Republic, analysts said.

Jordan will not forgive those who spill its citizens' blood — Monarch

(Continued from page 1)

a visit by Iraqi officials in "the near future" to the Kingdom to speed up reconciliation between the two countries.

The statements of the ambassador and Mr. Rashid came 48 hours after His Majesty King Hussein denounced the executions and described the act as "a heinous crime."

A government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that a meeting took place between Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan on the fringes of the Islamic Conference.

"Mr. Majali demanded the release of Jordanian prison-

ers in Iraq and Mr. Ramadan promised to do his best to resolve the deadlock," said the official.

On Friday, the bodies of Riaz Bsharah and Waleed Nseirat were buried in their native hometowns in Amman and Irbid respectively.

The bodies of Sa'ad and Salah Al Dowji, the other two Jordanians who were hanged to death, were buried last week in the Iraqi capital.

Minister of State for Information Affairs Samir Mutawi told reporters on Saturday that the government had exercised "every effort to revoke the death sentences of the four Jordanians."

"We hope that the present contacts with the Iraqi gov-

ernment will result in releasing the fifth person sentenced to death in Iraqi jails," Dr. Mutawi said.

"They promised to look sympathetically at the Jordanian requests," said the minister. He declined to elaborate. Dr. Mutawi emphasised that the foreign minister, who met with Jordan's charge d'affaires in Baghdad after he was summoned to Amman, is preparing a "comprehensive report" on the subject that would be released soon.

The minister said the government does not have enough information about the number of Jordanian prisoners in Iraq.

But unofficial estimates put the number of detainees in Iraq at several hundreds.

Meanwhile, two international human rights groups criticised Iraq for executing the four Jordanians and demanded Baghdad ensure the safety of a fifth who is facing death penalty.

"The execution of four Jordanian nationals on Dec. 8, 1997 in Baghdad has heightened fears for the life of a fifth Jordanian sentenced to death in recent days," said a statement by the Amnesty International.

The group urged to send messages, telegrams and faxes to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Interior Minister Mohammed Abdul Razaq and Justice Minister Shabib Malik to ensure the safety of Mr. Shehabeddine, the two-page statement said.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) sent a letter to President Saddam Hussein expressing its "deep concern over the execution of the four Jordanians."

"The HRW, which oppose the use of the death penalty in all cases, said it was especially troubled by several recent rulings by the Revolutionary Command Council greatly expanding the number of crimes punishable by death," said the group's statement, which was faxed to the Jordan Times.

"HRW called on the Iraqi government to release full information about the trial of the four, including the precise charges and the text of the judgement against them..." said the statement.

Parliament pledges to execute King's directives hand-in-hand with cabinet

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Srour.

Stressing that the House will pursue the King's directives in transforming the Jordanian society into a productive society, Mr. Srour said the House "will give due attention to the liberalisation of the economy, the opening of markets and the flow of international trade by giving special encouragement and care to the private sector through laws and legislation which will help attract investments. These measures are bound to help address poverty and unemployment."

Referring to the role of Jordanian women, Mr. Srour said that "social and humanitarian aspects require from us to remain committed to giving Jordanian women a role to play in socio-economic development, in production and in social work. The House will enact laws on social work and health insurance to safeguard the right of women in society."

"The House will also give due care to questions related to children, the men of tomorrow. We will provide the necessary legislation enabling children to grow in a sound atmosphere that will help ensure their physi-

cal, social and mental health," Mr. Srour added.

He said that Parliament will give due care to social issues that are no less important than economic matters and "it will enact legislation to promote the role of development funds, promote vocational training programmes, boost tourism and increase incentives for investments in various regions to benefit the Jordanian community in the different parts of the Kingdom."

Mr. Srour said that the House "will give due care to the modernisation of laws to ensure the basic rights of all citizens, giving them the freedom of expression within the framework of the law."

"We realise the importance of enacting a modern election law that can cater to the political and social changes in society, and the requirements of the coming century and which should ensure equality and justice. This requires close cooperation with the government," Mr. Srour pointed out.

Mr. Srour reviewed Jordan's efforts to help secure a comprehensive peace based on U.N. resolutions but said Israel has been aborting this process.

"The present government

in Israel has turned its back on commitments made to the international community by insisting on building more settlements on Arab lands and has been intent on aborting the peace process and disregarding the calls for peace that would ensure the rights of all peoples in the region," he noted.

"In the view of this situation, Parliament believes that all Arab countries are called on to shoulder their responsibilities, reestablish their solidarity and create a united front that would force Israel to comply with the requirements of peace," he added.

With reference to Palestine he said the Parliament supports "Your Majesty's stand with regard to the Palestinian brothers within the course of the peace process and confirms Jordan's role as seeking the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian homeland with its capital in Jerusalem."

Referring to Iraq, Mr. Srour reiterated Jordan's commitment to back the Iraqi people's endeavour to lift the sanctions and Jordan's continued efforts to safeguard Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and alleviate the sufferings of the

Iraqi people.

In its reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Senate said that the King's address to Parliament "embodied a clear vision about the challenges facing the country."

"The Senate pledges to shoulder full responsibility towards cooperation with the executive authority in enacting and endorsing laws and legislation that tend to boost construction and development and will particularly help in enacting a new elections law that can cater to the social and political development needs," said the reply delivered by Senate Speaker Zeid Rifai.

"The Senate will help enact laws that would ensure justice and equality among Jordanians and will help promote laws on political parties and professional unions to help promote the role of unions and will give due attention to the Press and Publications Law with a view to promoting the role of journalism," Mr. Rifai said.

He said that the Senate highly values the role of the Armed and Security Forces and will support all government efforts designed to promote their role in protecting security and defending the nation.

Landmark financial services pact agreed at WTO

GENEVA (AFP) — The World Trade Organisation (WTO) Saturday reached a landmark agreement on global financial services liberalisation, WTO Director General Renato Ruggiero said.

"We have made an historic deal," Mr. Ruggiero told reporters. "This is a historic day for the world economy" and a "golden year for the international trading system."

The accord hammered out in the 132-member WTO will open up world markets in banking, insurance, asset management and brokerage, industries whose revenues run into trillions of dollars.

The final agreement involves some 70 countries and covers more than 95 per cent of the world market in this sector, Mr. Ruggiero said.

Washington, whose backing was essential for a pact, held out until the last minute and beyond, pushing negotiations two hours past a midnight (2300 GMT) Friday deadline in a bid to work out final details.

The United States had problems with the Malaysian offer, and there were also last minute hitches with the exact wording of a deal to extend to other countries an existing Japanese bilateral insurance agreement with Washington.

But the problems were finally resolved, with the United States making a partial exception of its market opening offer for Malaysia, without naming it directly.

This is to protect insurance company AIG, which has a 100 per cent owned Malaysian unit and does not want to have to reduce its stake. Malaysia is now offering 51 per cent foreign ownership of insurance companies.

U.S. President Bill Clinton welcomed the agreement, saying it would improve market access in areas where U.S. business is strong.

It was "particularly encouraging that so many countries chose to move forwards rather than backwards" and open their markets further given the recent financial

crisis in South East Asia, Mr. Clinton said in a statement.

European Commission Vice President Leon Brittan said "it is a very good deal for the world and a very good deal for the WTO," which would "strengthen the world economy" and help restore confidence in South East Asia.

He stressed that the European Union (EU) had been right to stick to its guns and insist on an agreement giving full most favoured nation status even when many other countries believed it could not be done.

The EU had been determined to avoid a repeat performance of the scenario two years ago when it stepped in with an interim agreement after the United States backed away from a deal at the

last minute, saying the Asian and Latin American market opening offers did not go far enough.

But insurers and bankers threw their weight behind a deal this time around, citing improvements in the liberalisation bids that some 70 countries had put forward.

They were quick to welcome Saturday's deal.

"It is a very good deal," said Bob Bastine of the Coalition of Service Industries. He said he hoped it would help bring stabilisation and "increase confidence in emerging markets."

The U.S. Securities Industries Association said in a statement: "We welcome this accord which will accelerate the global trend towards more market oriented

financial systems."

Most Asian countries, including financially-strapped South Korea, Indonesia and Thailand, recipients of International Monetary Fund aid, agreed to further market opening moves this time around.

Mr. Ruggiero paid tribute to their efforts, saying "with so much of the world facing economic turbulence, negotiators from all our member states have shown once again the courage and commitment to pursue the policies of liberalisation which are essential to economic stability, growth and development."

The size of the financial services sector has exploded in the last decade. An estimated \$1.2 trillion are traded daily in the foreign

exchange markets and total banking assets are estimated at \$20 trillion, insurance premiums at \$2 trillion and stock market capitalisation at more than \$10 trillion.

The United States is the largest, and most open financial services market. More than 400 foreign insurance firms and 1,000 overseas banks and investment houses are already active in the U.S. economy.

The agreement caps an "annus mirabilis" for the WTO, Sir Brittan said.

In February, 69 WTO members signed a deal liberalising telecommunications markets and earlier this month the United States, the EU, Japan and last December some other countries sealed a pact to eliminate tariffs on trade in information technology products by 2000.

Glass ceiling hangs heavy over women of the world

GENEVA (R) — The world may be becoming a more female-friendly place but corporate boardrooms are not, with women holding under three per cent of top management jobs in Western firms, according to a United Nations survey.

Women make up over 40 per cent of the world's workforce but even when they make it through the "glass ceiling" — an invisible barrier of male-dominated prejudices and networks — they earn far less than men, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) report said.

"Almost universally, women have failed to reach leading positions in major corporations and private sector organisations irrespective of their abilities," said author Linda Wirth.

"The higher the position, the more glaring the gender gap," she added.

The ILO said men traditionally relied on "old boy" networks to climb up the ladder.

Women were more "invisible" in the corporate world because they were less keen on informal gatherings. They were also fighting a losing battle against sexual harassment.

A British study found that women in one company subjected to continuing sexual harassment and bullying failed to achieve promotion whatever strategy they used.

"Protesting and complaining earned them the label of 'feminist' and 'whinging' while trying to be 'one of the men' invited further harassment," the ILO report said.

A survey of 300 companies in Britain last year found that just three per cent of board members were women.

In the FTSE top 100 companies listed in Britain, women held just four per cent of directors' posts and two per cent of executive posts while female managers earned just 71 per cent of the salary of their male counterparts, the ILO said.

British female managers as a whole earned 83 per cent of the salaries of their male counterparts — putting them ahead of their counterparts in most other countries.

The situation in Germany was no better. A survey of the 70,000 largest companies found that women there held just one to three per cent of the top executive and boardroom positions.

The ILO also reported that the comparatively high proportion of women executives in large French companies — 13 per cent — was now falling again from 1980s levels.

American women managers were only slightly better off.

The survey found that an above-average 46 per cent

of the American managerial workforce were female, but that only a few made it to the top.

Women accounted for just 1.9 per cent of the highest-paid director and top executive posts in the United States and held only 2.4 per cent of the top management jobs, the ILO said.

Weekly earnings of women managers in the United States averaged just 68 per cent of those of male managers.

The survey said women had done well in the Netherlands, where they nearly doubled their representation in senior management to more than 20 per cent in two decades.

In Canada, they zoomed up to over 20 per cent from just four per cent in the same period. Women in Finland and Australia were also increasing their representation in top management.

ment.

The survey found that women were more numerous than men at the lower end of the pay scale, where there were also more job ghettos — when a discriminated group begin to become dominant in a position, isolating themselves from moving up and out.

In Japan and the United States, the study found that certain jobs were so segregated that nearly half of the women professionals worked in just two occupations — nursing and teaching.

Because of the discrimination against women in the workplace, the survey said more and more women were going it alone to set up their own businesses. Women run a third of all small and medium-sized U.S. firms and account for a third of all entrepreneurs in Finland.

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18 Go to war
20 Close companion
22 1998 Olympics site
23 Distant Nin
24 Digestive juice
25 Not so harsh
27 Headwear with dangling bells
31 Troquois tribe members
32 Loggins or Rogers
33 Spanish exclamation
34 Performer's engagements
35 Palm fruit
36 Air pollution
38 Cubic decimeter
39 Laughing predator?
40 Unstained
42 Made liquid by heat
43 — dox
44 — Park, New Jersey
45 Hot-plate platform
46 Mended leaks
51 Bring about
53 Tarry
54 Way to Rome
55 Antigone's uncle
56 Space saucers
57 Actor Parker
58 Metric weights
59 Partial prefix

1 Down
Buffalo Bill
2 Spicy stew
3 Look for trouble
4 International understandings
5 Star in Aquila
6 Watercraft
7 Walk on the wild side?

8 Mineral in the raw
9 Family gatherings
10 Well-worn phrases
11 "Mia"
12 Sacred song
13 Former name of Exxon
19 Friendly
21 West and others
24 Stupid mistake
25 Musical repeat sign
26 Hunter of stars
27 Honored with a celebration
28 Wake up and get with it
29 Stag
30 Heathen
32 Interviewer
35 Oil-level checker
36 Contents of a curriculum
38 Outcast

47 Currier and
48 Stagger
49 Ancient kingdom south of the Dead Sea
50 Lucy's husband
52 Hindu title of respect

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Your focus is on money, specifically money you share with other people. This could be a loan, or even the household account. Is your sweetheart getting ready to splurge big-time on the feast for this evening? Maybe that \$25 bottle of wine is a bit excessive.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Happy Thanksgiving! It's a beautiful day to make plans and commitments. This morning, a surprise could change your agenda slightly. You'll either get a legacy or things will cost more than you expected, or both. Don't worry. Everything works out fine.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You shouldn't have to work today — it's a holiday. Well, maybe you get to go out, but you're still going to stay busy. There's some sort of festivity going on at home. Are you having the dinner this year? Expect unexpected company. Have a great time!

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) This is a good day for romance. You also have an intense workload. A lot of communications chores need to be done. You may be thinking "Hey, it's my day off!" Ask your loved ones to help. Juggle things so you have plenty of time for yourself as well as for the others.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Happy Thanksgiving! Chances are good you'll be entertaining at home. There's also a push to travel, however. Can you do a little of both? Don't worry. You're up for it. You can get there and back in half the time it usually takes.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You are again sharp, focused and powerful. Use information you've recently learned to help you save. If you're having the gang over for dinner, be forewarned. There will be more people showing up than you invited. Everybody just likes to be around you, that's all.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Pool money to get things you need. If you're paying off a legal debt, don't complain. It's probably less than it could have been. You're pushed to do things you previously promised your partner you'd do. The result will be an increase in your love for each other.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're pretty lucky, but chances are high you'll say something you shouldn't. Watch out for that this evening. There's no need for anyone to know how much money you make, or what you spend it on. Let that kind of information stay confidential for a while.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Do you have a sense of grim foreboding? Could a confrontation come up tonight you'd just as soon do without? Not to worry. Even if one of your relatives says something annoying, you'll get through it fine. Just remember not to take any of it too seriously.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Have everybody over for dinner tonight. A meeting at their house would also work. The point is, you need to make contact with people you love. It's their encouragement that gives you the strength to carry on. And you may need it during the next few weeks.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There could be some surprise today. Someone you haven't heard from in years could give you a call. You're under pressure from an older person, though. Something can't be put off any longer. Make sure you get the work done first, so you can play later.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You want to get on the road, but there are important things to finish. Make a good list and you'll be more effective. Don't forget to leave the answering machine on. You could get an important call. You can do just about everything; you just have to get organized.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

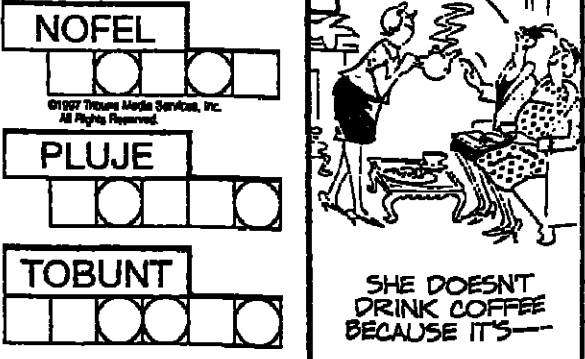
THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



"If the cat says 'meow' you know exactly what she wants. How come you don't understand me that easily?"

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: NOFEL PLUJE TOBUNT CAFFEE

Yesterday's Jumbles: PARCH CLEFT JOBBER POTENT Answer: Building a dog house for Fido turned into this — A PET PROJECT

Daily Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Many Jordanian industries may fail if they do not develop, improve quality of products

**** MANY LOCAL industries could be hurt and forced out of the production process if they fail to improve and develop their products once Jordan joins the World Trade Organisation (WTO), a senior official at the Ministry of Industry and Trade said in a lecture recently.**

Tamam Al Ghoul, director of the WTO office at the ministry, said there are justifications for the fears of industrialists from the negative effects that will result from becoming a WTO member, especially from the reduction in customs. "By lowering customs, the door will be opened wider for imports which will heighten competition for local products, especially if the imports were of better quality and cheaper or similar in price to local products," she explained.

In a move to compensate its loss from customs revenue when tariffs on imports are reduced, the government may resort to raising the sales tax rate or to impose other local fees which will be levied on both imported and locally-produced products on the same footing, Ms. Ghoul said. "Unlike customs tariffs which are imposed on imports only, the fees on locally-manufactured products will

lessen the protection level and will weaken the competitive edge of prices on local products," she added.

Ms. Ghoul indicated that protecting intellectual property rights in various forms will increase the costs for producers as they are obliged to pay for patent rights and trademarks as well as for the authors' and publishers' rights. "Pharmaceutical industries, computer programmes, musical tapes, videos and books may be hurt in this category."

Another advantage that industries will lose will be the exemption of export income from tax as that is one of many forms of subsidies according to the WTO rules, the director said. She warned that by not joining, foreign investors will be reluctant to invest in Jordan because they will not be sure that their rights (patents and trademarks) will be protected.

Ms. Ghoul said that although Jordan has started to open up and liberalise its economy before applying to join the WTO, much remains to be done in changing some current trade-related laws to become more in line with WTO requirements (Al Ra'i).

GDRs of Arab Potash Company listed on Amman Financial Market

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Global Depository Receipt (GDR) of the Arab Potash Company was listed at the Amman Financial Market on Saturday following a similar step in the London bourse on Monday, an economic analyst said Saturday.

Omar Masri, the managing director of AIG Investment Group (AIG) the local advisor to the issue's lead manager, Nomura International, said that the listing of GDR in the Amman stock market followed the signing ceremony of the local custodian agreement between the Arab Potash Company and the BritishBank in Amman.

The deal, priced at JD6.4 dinars (\$9.03) per GDR, is close to the current price of the share at the AFM but not at a premium.

The offering, which was launched last November in Tokyo, has placed a total of 3.62 million shares with global investors. Part of unsubscribed shares from an earlier public issue was included.

Mr. Masri told the Jordan Times that the new listing of the potash shares in the international market would enhance investment opportunities in the Kingdom.

"It is a grand breaking event that will help put Jordan in the Middle East investment map after having been absent for the past three years," Mr.

Masri said.

He said the listing will raise the profile of the company in the region and allow the firm to finance new projects in Jordan.

The listing of the Arab Potash Company shares in the world market involved having international and local custodians to handle the revenue of selling the GDR abroad and in Jordan and to enable the firm to tackle the lack of liquidity.

The BritishBank and the Bank of New York were chosen as custodians in Amman and abroad respectively.

On Friday, Arab Potash Company Chairman Saleh Irsheidat announced the completion of listing the GDR worldwide after it

was marketed in Asian, European and American markets.

During the signing ceremony of the custodianship with the BritishBank, Mr. Irsheidat said that \$32.7 million of revenue were generated from selling the GDR bonds worldwide.

The Arab Potash Company, where the government owns 51 per cent of its capital, will use the amount to finance projects to expand its production capacity.

The firm, a major world producer which is expected to register a JD19 million net profit in 1997, is planning to raise the annual production capacity to two million tonnes.

Romania seeks more business, trade with Jordan

AMMAN (Petra) — Christian Matesco, the head of North Africa and the Middle East desk at Romania's ministry of industry and trade, who is currently visiting Jordan, said Saturday that his country was deeply interested in promoting economic relations and trade exchanges with Jordan.

Speaking on the occasion of opening the first Romanian trade week in 12 years, Mr. Matesco indicated that the two countries have a wide range of commodities which they can exchange and can also cooperate in tourism and other specialised services.

Referring to investments, he said that a great number of Romanian firms have strong ties with Jordan and have expressed their desire to export their commodities to the Kingdom especially timber, steel, chemicals, vehicles, textiles and poultry.

Romanian companies are also willing to bring expertise and capital and also transport Romanian commodities via Jordan to other countries, the Romanian official added.

"Romania is interested in importing vegetables, fruits, tomato paste, medicines, chemicals and electronic equipment from Jordan," Mr. Matesco said.

Romania and Jordan are both interested in developing mutual economic cooperation and they have cooperated in the past in expanding the Jordan Petroleum Refinery in Zarqa, electrifying rural regions and exploring for oil among other projects, he pointed out.

"Romania, with its 23 million inhabitants, is the largest market in central Europe after Poland and acquires a strategic geographical location linking eastern and western Europe and overlooking the Black Sea and the Danube River and it enjoys a developed network of communications and railways," according to Mr. Matesco.

He said that Romania is ready to offer all facilities to foreign investments, including those from Jordan, adding that more than 300 Romanian-Jordanian joint firms with a combined capital of more than \$10 million are operating in Romania.

The Romanian official called on Jordan to participate in Romania's trade fairs which he said are organised annually in May and October, displaying various types of industrial equipment.

The present Romanian trade week at Tyche Hotel will run until Dec. 16 and is expected to contribute to promoting economic and trade exchanges.

He voiced Romania's appreciation of Jordan's interest in bolstering economic and trade links with Romania.

Study: Germany most expensive, South Africa cheapest for business

LONDON (AFP) — Germany is the most expensive country in the world in which to run a company, while South Africa is the cheapest, a study has said.

Three economies that have been ravaged by the financial turmoil across south East Asia, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia, provide the next most inexpensive business locations, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) said.

Its findings came before

countries, which will have made them even more competitive, researchers said.

Wages, employers' costs, rents, business taxes, telecommunications, transport and corruption costs were assessed in 27 countries selected by the EIU because they already attract, or are expected to attract, considerable inward investment.

Wages were highest in Germany, where high taxes sealed the country's lead as the most expensive

business location, behind the United States and Belgium.

"A key finding of the report is the competitiveness of countries in south East Asia and, in particular, of three countries among those worst affected by the current financial crisis: Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand," the EIU said in a statement.

The study found that in fourth place, Britain was more expensive than its closest European trading partner, France, because of

high rents and fuel costs.

The strength of the pound in 1997 has made Britain relatively more expensive, the EIU said.

On Tuesday, Japanese auto giant Toyota announced that it would build a 150,000-car-a-year plant in northern France rather than in Britain, where it already has a factory.

The decision rekindled fears that Britain may lose its position as the preferred destination of foreign investment in Europe.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7770	0.6058	1.4367	130.25	1.4198	1742.50	2.0015	5.9464
DE Mark	0.5627	-	0.3407	0.8084	73.28	0.7987	980.20	1.1282	3.3462
GB Sterling	1.5505	2.9275	-	2.3844	215.01	2.3434	2876.00	3.3095	9.8145
CH Franc	0.6890	123.52	0.4214	-	90.53	0.9877	1212.17	139.31	4.1365
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3638	0.4648	1.1026	-	1.0896	13.37	153.61	4.5835
CA Dollar	0.7043	1.2440	0.4237	1.0078	1.09	-	1218.51	1.4022	4.1675
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0195	0.3475	0.8824	1339.58	0.8146	-	11.48	3.4116
NL Guilder	0.4896	88.76	0.3025	71.78	65.03	0.7092	870.38	-	2.9702
FR Franc	0.1682	0.2987	0.1018	24.1487	21.38	0.2386	33.54	33.6400	-

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7080	3.7505	0.3770	3.8408	0.3045	3.6728	1531.00	3.4015
Jordan Dinar	1.4124	-	5.2973	0.5325	6.1424	0.4301	5.1876	2162.43	4.8044
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1898	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0812	0.38	408.21	0.3089
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8780	9.9483	-	9.58	0.8077	9.74	4061.01	9.0225
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1945	1.0301	1.0301	-	0.0836	1.01	420.51	0.9343
Kuwait Dinar	3.2841	2.3251	12.3169	1.2351	11.96	-	12.05	5027.91	0.9343
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1928	1.0212	0.1026	0.9813	0.0828	-	416.85	0.9261
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4624	2.4497	0.2452	2.3781	0.1989	2.3990	-	2.2218
Egyptian	0.2940	0.2081	1.1026	0.1108	1.0704	0.0895	1.0798	450.10	-

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	17.30	17.15
WTI	18.18	18.15
Bonny	17.30	17.15
Dubai	16.40	16.32
UL Gas	176.00	175.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4740	0.18156	0.38329	34.7415
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.48403	0.16495	0.39139	35.4773
KW Dinar	3.2841	5.83771	1.98955	4.72144	427.859
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.71476	1.6072	3.81243	345.662
CY Pound	1.911	3.3958	1.1575	2.7455	248.308

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	282.5	283
Silver (oz's)	5.8	5.9
Platinum (oz's)	380.5	382.5
AL (3 Months)	1583	1586
CU (3 Months)	1810	1815
Zinc (3 Months)	1137.5	1142
Lead (3 Months)	535	537
NI (3 Months)	6230	6250

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)					
Cncy	Month	3 Months	6 Months	9 Months	1 Year
USD	5.81	6.78	5.78	5.84	5.87
GBP	7.43	7.44	7.68	7.68	7.68
JPY	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31
DEM	3.68	3.70	3.56	3.58	3.54
FRF	4.10	3.61	3.69	3.90	3.90
CHF	1.26	1.40	1.49	1.58	1.63
ITL	6.10	6.04	6.53	6.38	6.20

Main Equity Indices						
Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low
New York	DOW JONES	7838.3	-10.69	-0.14	7904.94	7784.33
New York	S&P 500	953.39	-1.55	-0.16	961.32	947
London	FT-SE 100	5045.2	9.3	0.18	5068.6	5035.8
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	16904.3	-145.85	-0.91	16153.4	15738.4
Paris	CAC 40	2830.26	1.81	0.06	2861.92	2820.36
Frankfurt	DAX	4082.6	52.44	1.3	4082.6	4048.01

Energy		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/bf)	182	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1784	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	295.1	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	124.5	Spot
Soya (c/bf)	24.32	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	158	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	370	Spot

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.168	1.1738
DE Mark	0.3977	0.3997
CH Franc	0.4919	0.4944
FR Franc	0.1188	0.1194
JP Yen	0.5426	0.5463
NL Guilder	0.353	0.3548
IT Lira	0.4058	0.4078

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHEIKH SAH											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 13/12/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
346,000	249,000	ARAB BANK	15.2	1.21	7	4180	1383560	331.00	331.00	-	-
N 2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	5.7	0.00	5	2500	4528	1.83	1.81	-0.02	-
S 3,600	1,830	BANK OF JORDAN	5.8	0.00	1	250	463	1.90	1.85	-0.05	-
N 1,190	890	MID. EAST INV. BK.	78.8	0.00	35	350000	420000	1.14	1.20	+0.06	-
S 2,580	1,150	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.3	6.11	16	5173	13425	2.58	2.59	+0.01	-
S 5,300	4,600	THE HOUSING BK.	15.3	3.79	6	6480	32356	5.15	5.12	-0.03	-
S 4,180	1,850	JOR. KUNAIT BANK	10.6	0.00	12	24108	48154	1.96	1.99	+0.03	-
S 990	720	JOR. GULF BANK	4.2	9.86	14	16500	11819	-72	-71	-0.01	-
TS 4,050	2,460	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.3	3.97	2	500	8949	2.46	2.42	-0.04	-
S 1,530	1,110	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	P	0.00	2	15000	17100	1.14	1.24	+0.10	-
S 3,900	3,080	JOR. INV. FTM. BANK	23.9	0.00	4	2200	8188	3.78	3.72	-0.06	-
S 4,990	2,500	ARAB BANKING CO.	20.0	0.00	3	380	1050	2.75	2.77	+0.02	-
BANK SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 236.08 %CHG: -0.15											
107 427131 1942391											
2,020	1,590	JOR. PRINCE INSUR.	5.7	7.43	13	16600	32876	1.96	2.02	+0.06	-
2,500	1,990	JORDAN GULF INSUR.	9	0.00	1	10000	25000	2.49	2.50	+0.01	-
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 118.38 %CHG: +0.34											
14 26600 57876											
2,050	1,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.4	5.13	20	15493	30209	1.94	1.95	+0.01	-
T 3,250	2,450	HIGH MINERALS	17.2	4.57	2	210	715	3.25	3.41	+0.16	-
6,100	3,720	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	11.1	5.56	1	50	1260	3.72	3.60	-0.12	-
1,550	930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	13	8100	8440	1.09	1.04	-0.05	-
810	470	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	24.1	0.00	3	1939	911	47	47	-	-
7,100	3,960	AD-DUSTOUR	29.6	3.52	1	500	3550	7.10	7.10	-	-
3,900	2,890	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	9.8	0.00	3	600	2249	3.73	3.75	+0.02	-
1,050	740	JORDAN EXPT. INV.	9	0.00	2	15000	12850	0.82	0.86	+0.04	-
2,230	1,630	UNIFIED CO.	7.9	6.63	2	200	332	1.68	1.66	-0.02	-
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 107.34 %CHG: -0.65											
47 42092 59435											
1,150	930	ATTANQUEE	9	0.00	3	2900	3335	1.15	1.15	-	-
4,450	3,010	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.4	3.63	12	1384	4387	3.03	3.03	-	-
3,260	1,330	INDUSTRIAL CON. AGR.	9	0.00	1	450	653	1.45	1.45	-	-
4,700	3,440	ARAB PHARM. IND.	11.3	4.89	29	7989	32509	4.05	4.09	+0.04	-
1,670	1,020	JOR. PIPES MANFACT.	16.7	5.93	3	1750	2363	1.36	1.35	-0.01	-
6,000	4,400	DAR AL-ADWA, DV. INV.	13.6	4.50	9	7500	41499	5.50	5.55	+0.05	-
3,850	2,220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.3	11.03	1	500	568	2.30	2.27	-0.03	-
1,620	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.5	0.00	11	4950	2228	4.45	4.45	-	-
6,730	780	ARAB PAPER CON. TRD.	23.8	0.00	5	4800	3744	78	78	-	-
770	510	NATIONAL IND.	9	0.00	2	1250	663	53	53	-	-
890	430	JOR. SULPHO-CEM.	9	0.00	2	750	110	69	69	-	-
1,610	1,210	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	14.8	6.03	2	500	580	1.21	1.16	-0.05	-
1,840	840	UNIV. MOON. INDUS.	P	0.00	20	20000	14424	0.84	0.82	-0.02	-
1,410	690	IND. INDUS. RESOURCES	9.4	14.28	3	1470	2433	71	70	-0.01	-
1,040	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.3	0.00	6	2700	2403	89	89	-	-
1,980	1,340	EL-ZAY READY WEAR	48.2	0.00	2	250	344	1.38	1.37	-0.01	-
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS INDEX: 115.26 %CHG: -0.01											
123 83380 141638											
GRAND TOTAL INDEX: 169.82 %CHG: -0.12											
291 579203 2201339											
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SATURDAY 13/12/1997											
620	410	MACH. SUP. MENT. HAIR.	9	0.00	1	250	133	50	53	+0.03	-
610	350	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.1	0.00	12	21000	7225	35	34	-0.01	-
570	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	4	4000	1640	41	41	-	-
N 1,000	720	AL-SHARQ INV. CO.	9	0.00	2	4000	3900	1.00	0.97	-0.03	-
780	410	AL-DANATILAN 75	66.2	0.00	2	2500	1100	69	69	-	-
N 2,050	1,050	CERTURY INV. GROUP	E	0.00	1	200	400	2.05	2.00	-0.05	-
380	140	JOR. INDUS. MATCH-CEM.	9	0.00	2	500	75	16	15	-0.01	-
530	290	ARAB INTL. TRV. TRD.	32.2	8	2	8750	2463	70	66	-0.04	-
380	180	NATL. IND. ENG. JAMICO	9	0.00	5	14300	5863	41	41	-	-
N 1,200	890	READY MIX CONCRETE	12.1	0.00	1	5000	5000	1.00	1.00	-	-
520	400	ARAB ELECT. IND.	9	0.00	5	210	310	38	44	+0.01	-
560	480	KHAYAT PIGMAN 75	9	0.00	6	21200	8056	63	63	-	-
470	290	INDOS. ENG.	9	0.00	2	750	213	29	28	-0.01	-
820	490	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	40	58500	30680	52	53	+0.01	-
N 1,000	640	NAT. ALUMINUM 75	91.8	0.00	1	200	200	67	66	-0.01	-
N 1,050	720	ARAB INT. FOOD FACT.	42.4	0.00	2	1085	977	95	90	-0.05	-
N 1,000	670	MODERN FOOD IND. 75	E	0.00	3	1000	1340	67	70	+0.03	-
TH 850	850	MOD. FOOD 75	AUCTION	0.00	3	30000	13900	85	72	-13	-
GRAND TOTAL 96 175785 83288											

ASF to decide soon on date of 9th Pan-Arab Games

Jordan attends Asian Olympic meeting in New Delhi

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's top Olympic officials left for New Delhi Saturday to take part in the meeting of the General Assembly of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).

Jordan Olympic Committee Vice Chairman Mouaffaq Al Fawwaz and Secretary General Ismat Al Kurdi will attend the meeting expected to tackle a host of crucial issues and endorse decisions pertaining to Asian sports.

In a telephone interview with the Jordan Times, Dr. Fawwaz said issues on the agenda are the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok, the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, reports on the 2002 Asian Games in Pusan, South Korea, deciding the host city for the 2003 Asian Winter Games, as well as the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Dr. Fawwaz recently attended the OCA's Asian Sports Development Committee meetings which reviewed Bangkok's preparations for the upcoming Asian Games.

Dr. Fawwaz and Mr. Kurdi are also expected to meet OCA Chairman Sheikh Fahd Al Ahmad and Prince Faisal Bin Fahd, president of the Arab Sports Federation (ASF), which will soon decide on the final date of the 9th Pan-Arab Games.

The ASF had originally approved Jordan's bid to host the Games in Amman in 2001 and Kuwait was chosen as a substitute in case Jordan withdrew its bid.

Jordanian sports officials have underlined their support for organising and taking part in the Pan-Arab Games which have only been held eight

times since 1953.

However, recent reports suggested that the ASF is most likely to request the Kingdom to hold the Games in 1999, slashing the time remaining to prepare for the event.

Reports Saturday said an ASF delegation headed by Secretary-General Othman Sa'ad, would visit the Kingdom at the end of the month to hold discussions with Jordanian sports officials and hand the Pan-Arab Games flag to the JOC.

"We have not yet received any official request to hold the Games in 1999 but if they ask us to we are more than ready," Dr. Fawwaz said.

He noted however that "if Amman is going to host the Games in 1999 we should start work immediately."

"We have to act now, to form committees with clear and defined job descriptions to carry out the necessary preparations."

"We have most of the necessary infrastructure. What we lack is a track and field stadium, some electronic timing machines and a multi-purpose indoor court."

"However, if the Games are held in 2001, then we can be more relaxed. We would still have enough time," he added.

Dr. Fawwaz said the JOC had recently presented Crown Prince Hassan with a blueprint of the Kingdom's preparations for hosting the 9th Pan-Arab Games in Amman.

Reasons for holding the Games two years earlier than scheduled have been several, including the recent decision to hold the 2nd Southwest Asian Games in Beirut in 2001.

While both events were held four months apart

this year, many observers believe that holding the two events in the same year might not be favourable for the participating athletes.

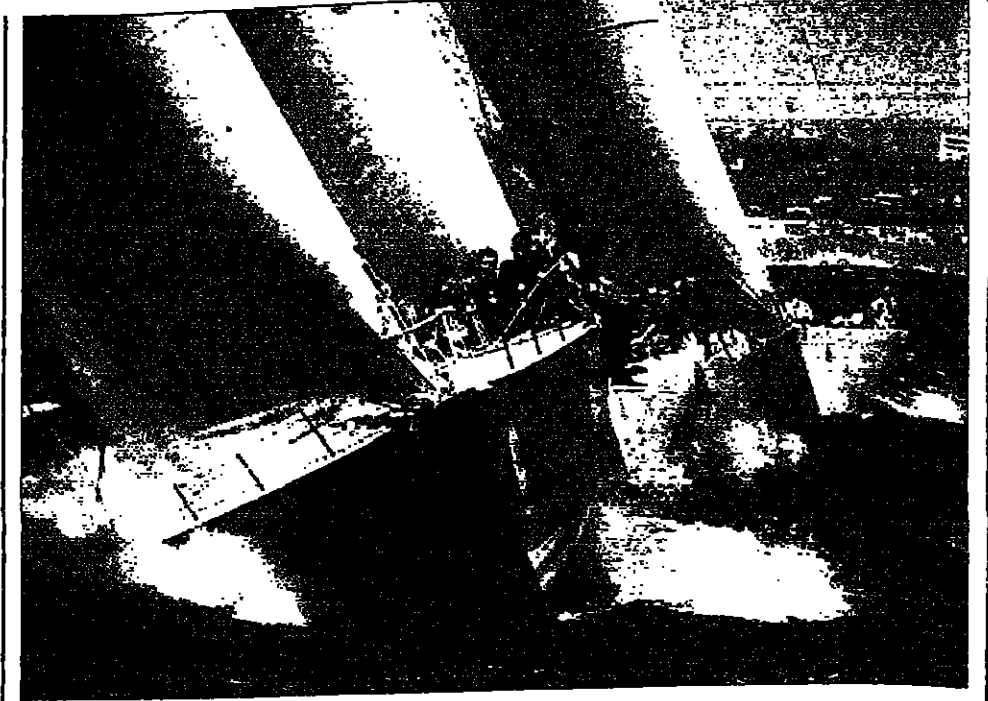
However, some officials say that the most likely reason for changing the date to 1999 and moving the Games from Amman to Kuwait is the fact that Iraq would most likely be invited to the Amman Games thus keeping away other Arab teams whose relations with Baghdad are strained.

The Games, designed to emphasise Arab brotherhood, were clouded by Lebanon's refusal to grant the Iraqi team entry visas for fear of angering Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in the 8th Games held last July which witnessed the best Jordanian showing to date since the Pan-Arab Games were launched.

With athletes competing in 14 of the 20 events, the Kingdom finished 5th overall among 19 competing countries, taking a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals compared to 9th overall in the 7th Pan-Arab Games in 1992, with 1 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals.

The Kingdom's athletes gained more gold medals in Beirut than in all the past 7 Pan-Arab Games together where Jordan took a total of 49 medals, including 7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze.

The Pan-Arab Games were held in Alexandria in 1953, Beirut 1957, Casablanca 1961, Cairo 1965, Damascus 1976, Morocco 1985, Damascus 1992 and Beirut 1997.



Yachts Swedish Match (L) Toshiba (C) and the American yacht Cheshire (R) race in single file as they begin the third leg of the Whitbread yacht race off the coast of Fremantle, West Australia December 13. The yachts will race 2,250 nautical miles to Sydney, scheduled to arrive there December 22 (Reuters photo)

Swedish yacht fastest away in Whitbread round-the-world race

PERTH (AFP) — Sweden's EF Language took an early lead Saturday as the nine yachts in the Whitbread round-the-world classic left the Western Australian port of Fremantle en route to Sydney.

In a blustery south-westerly wind of 18-20 knots (33-35 kilometres per hour), the Swedish boat took just 20 minutes to reach the first marker buoy off the popular Perth suburb of Cottesloe.

Skipped by Paul Cayard, EF Language rounded the second marker in another 25 minutes.

At that stage, the leader was followed by Merit Cup of Monaco, Sweden's Swedish Match, Toshiba of

the United States, Cheshire Racing also of the US, Britain's Silk Cut, compatriot boat EF Education, Dutch yacht Brunel Sunergy and and, at the rear, overall race leader Innovation Kvaerner of Norway.

The Norwegian boat is ahead on an overall total aggregate points system.

It has been the only consistent craft in the race, finishing third in the initial leg from Cowes in England to Cape Town and second in the second leg to Fremantle.

The first leg winner, Merit Cup, was only fifth over the second stretch.

Swedish Match won the second leg after coming a disappointing eighth to

Cape Town.

The nine-yacht fleet, displaying a dazzling array of spinnakers, provided a spectacular sight for the many spectator craft and the thousands of land-based spectators lining the coastline from Fremantle north to Cottesloe as it sailed initially only 300 metres (yards) offshore.

Race organisers said the fleet had now started its run to the Southern Ocean on the 2,250 nautical mile (3,985 kilometre) sprint to Sydney, on the Australian east coast.

The first yachts are expected to arrive in the New South Wales harbour on December 22.

Jazz edge out Mavericks in 5th-lowest NBA score total Nets beat Bulls; Lakers overcome Rockets

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Karl Malone scored 23 points as the Utah Jazz survived the Dallas Mavericks' excruciating slow-down offence for a 68-66 victory Friday night in the lowest-scoring National Basketball Association game this season.

Utah set a franchise record for fewest points and fewest field goals (23) in a game, and only a layup by Eric Strickland as time expired prevented Dallas from setting its own record for fewest points.

Mavericks coach Don Nelson played stall-ball the entire night and kept it close, but a shot-clock violation by Dallas with 10 seconds to play helped give Utah its seventh straight home win.

The combined total of 134 points was the fifth-lowest total in NBA history.

Los Angeles Lakers 119, Houston Rockets 102: In the Los Angeles suburb of Inglewood, Rick Fox scored a season-high 30 points and Kobe Bryant had a career-high 27 as Los Angeles snapped a three-game losing streak and ended Houston's nine-game winning streak.

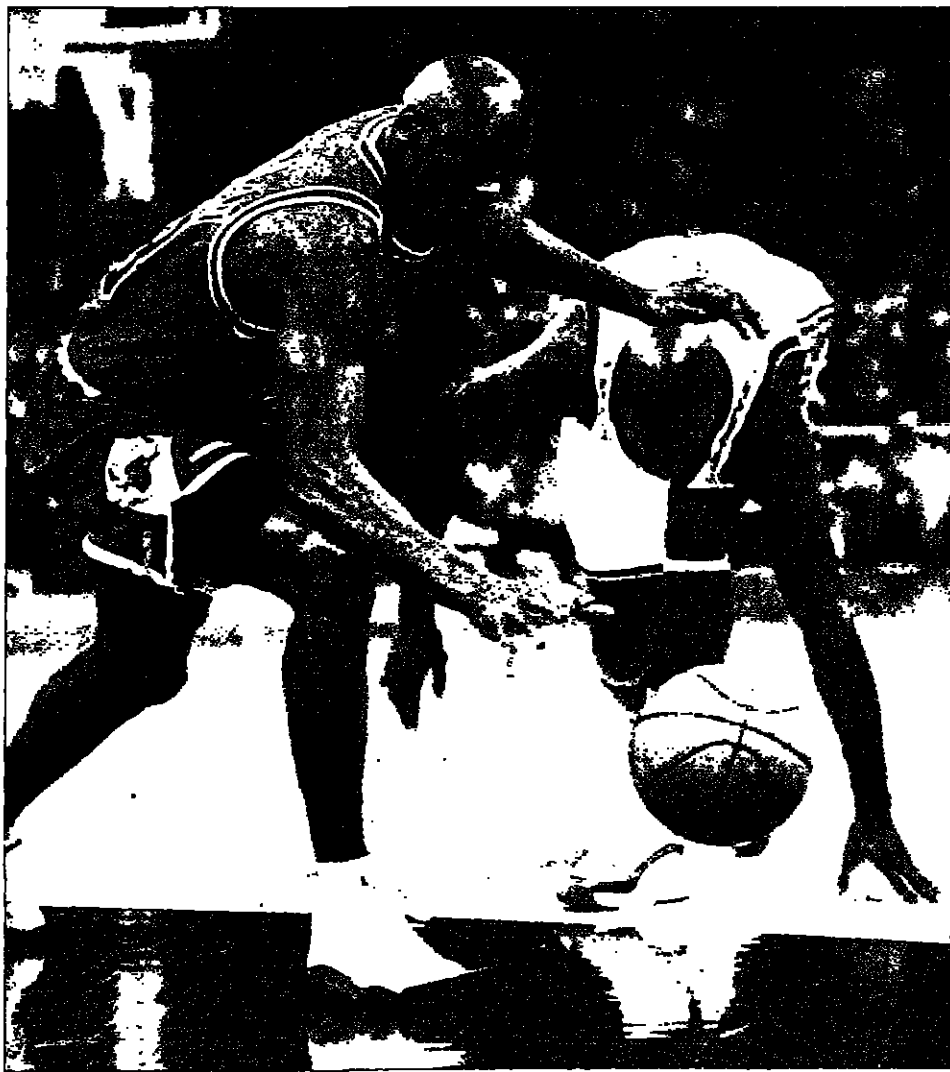
The Lakers, who won 11 straight to start the season, had lost their previous three games against Cleveland, Portland and Golden State.

Clyde Drexler scored 21 points to lead the Rockets, who hadn't lost since Nov. 16 at Phoenix. Charles Barkley added 18 points and 14 rebounds.

Boston Celtics 97, Washington Wizards 88: Boston used a scrappy defence to go on a 20-2 run in the fourth quarter and overtake cold-shooting Washington, in Boston.

The Celtics, who nearly squandered an 18-point lead before beating the Milwaukee Bucks by five Wednesday night, trailed 82-71 two minutes into the quarter before Travis Knight began the rally with a baseline jumper.

That started a 12-0 run



Chicago Bulls guard Michael Jordan goes after a loose ball from Charlotte Hornets guard Glen Rice December 12, during first half NBA action at the Charlotte Coliseum. Charlotte beat Chicago 79-77 (Reuters photo)

capped by Ron Mercer's two free throws that gave Boston an 83-82 lead. Juwan Howard's layup ended a scoring drought of 5:51 and gave the Wizards their last lead, 84-83 with 4:44 left.

Chauncey Billups followed with a 3-pointer that put Boston ahead to stay.

Philadelphia 76ers 106, Denver Nuggets 91: In Philadelphia, Jerry Stackhouse scored a season-high 32 points and Allen Iverson added 24 as Philadelphia defeated Denver.

Iverson also had eight assists, while Jimmy Jackson had 19 points and eight assists for the 76ers,

who broke a two-game losing streak. Eric Washington, Anthony Goldwire and Johnny Newman all had 14 points for Denver, which has lost seven of its last eight and remains winless (0-11) on the road.

Charlotte Hornets 79, Chicago Bulls 77: In Charlotte, North Carolina, Dell Curry's 5.5-metre jumper with five seconds left lifted Charlotte over Chicago as the Bulls lost for the eighth time in 12 road games this season.

Glen Rice had 21 points for the Hornets, who snapped their five-game losing streak against the

Bulls by holding Chicago to its lowest point total of the season.

The Bulls, held to a combined 27 points in the second and third quarters on 9-of-33 shooting, failed to hit the 100-point mark for the seventh time in eight games.

Indianapolis Pacers 104, Miami Heat 89: In Indianapolis, Rik Smits scored a season-high 29 points and Reggie Miller added 28 as Indiana defeated Miami.

The Pacers overcame a 28-point effort by Tim Hardaway to defeat the Heat for the 16th time in 18 games at Market Square Arena.

Mark Jackson tied his season high with 14 assists as he became the seventh player in NBA history to record 7,000.

Seattle SuperSonics 111, Portland Trail Blazers 98: In Seattle, Dale Ellis scored 12 of his season-high 19 points in the final quarter as Seattle improved its NBA-best record to 17-5 with a victory over Portland.

Gary Payton and Hersey Hawkins scored 21 points each and Vin Baker added 20 points and a season-high 17 rebounds to help the Sonics beat the Blazers for the second time this season and win their ninth in a row at home.

The Blazers, who entered the game with the league's best road record, lost for only the third time in 10 road games.

Vancouver Grizzlies 95, Golden State Warriors 88: In Vancouver, British Columbia, Shareef Abdul-Rahim scored 30 points, leading Vancouver in scoring for the 16th time this season, as the Grizzlies beat Golden State.

Bryant Reeves added seven of his 12 points in the fourth quarter as the Grizzlies snapped a three-game losing streak and won for only the second time in nine outings.

The Warriors, coming off Wednesday's 93-92 win over the Los Angeles Lakers, were led by Joe Smith, who scored 17 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter, and added a team-high 10 rebounds.

Atlanta Hawks 83, Los Angeles Clippers 74: In Los Angeles, Steve Smith scored five of his 22 points in the final 1:36 and Christian Laettner added 20 as Atlanta ended a three-game losing streak.

Dikembe Mutombo had 14 points and 15 rebounds to help Atlanta beat the Clippers for the seventh consecutive time, rookie Keith Closs had 15 points for Los Angeles.

Rush in no hurry to hang up his boots

NEWCASTLE (AFP) — Newcastle's veteran striker Ian Rush said Saturday he is likely to retire as a player at the end of the season.

The 36-year-old Welsh international, who has picked up 15 winners' medals during his 18-year playing career, thinks his next move will be into management.

The 73-times capped striker said: "I have to look at this as my last season as a player."

"I want to stay at the top as long as I can and although I never put a time limit on it I think this could be my last as a Premiership player."

"I want to go into management, I believe if I went somewhere lower down in the divisions there would be some opportunity on this side for me."

The former Chester, Liverpool and Juventus striker, currently on a one-year deal at Newcastle, believes he could become a coach in the lower divisions.

He added: "I've got until the end of the season with Newcastle and then I can start and look at what is going to happen for me."

"It doesn't get any easier the older you get and when I look at the top level I've got to look at my future. That's what I've started to do now."

"When I first started in the game I thought that anything, in terms of playing, over the age of 30 was a bonus. So I haven't done too bad have I?"

Red Sox sign Martinez to landmark deal

BOSTON (AFP) — Pedro Martinez may be three Cy Young awards shy of Greg Maddux, but the Boston Red Sox Friday gave the Dominican right-hander the biggest contract package in baseball history.

Martinez signed a six-year contract worth a guaranteed \$69 million with a seventh-year option that could escalate the total value of the deal to more than \$90 million.

"You can look at this as two three-year contracts with the first three averaging \$10 million annually and the second three averaging \$13 million annually," said Red Sox general manager Dan Duquette at an afternoon news conference. "And if Pedro fulfills the length of the contract, it could be worth up to \$90 million."

The length of the contract with the option averages the deal out to more than \$12.8 million per year. Without the option, the average annual salary is \$11.5 million. In August, Maddux of the Atlanta Braves agreed to a five-year deal worth \$57.5 million, averaging \$11.5 million per season.

Duquette compared Martinez at this stage of his career to Maddux when he left the Chicago Cubs and signed a free agent deal with the Braves in 1991.

"When Greg Maddux left the Cubs in '91 he was 26 and Pedro is 26 now," said Duquette. "I look at Pedro's career and he's at the same stage Maddux was then. Maddux had 71 wins with a 3.6 earned run average and Martinez has 65 wins with an ERA at 3."

Martinez was acquired from the financially strapped Montreal Expos on November 18, one week after winning the NL Cy Young. He was scheduled to become a free agent in 1998.

"I hope I can give the fans what they're hoping for a Greg Maddux performance which I know is difficult to achieve," said Martinez. "I'll take the challenge. I hope I can do the best I can and pray God I can stay healthy."

"Pedro will stabilize us for the foreseeable future," said Duquette. "He is an important building block in the process of showing our fans that we're committed to building a contender. I only have one bit of advice for Pedro regarding the extraordinary contract: stay humble."

Martinez was 17-9 with a major league-low 1.90 ERA in 1997. He struck out 305 batters and is the first pitcher since Steve Carlton of the 1972 Phillies to fan 300 in a season with an ERA below 2.00. Opponents hit just .184 off Martinez, who also led the majors with 13 complete games.

TODAY AT	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	Hisham Yunes Theatre
	HERCULES AND THE AMAZON WOMEN	Jim Carrey ... in LIAR — LIAR	Nour Al Sharif & Layla Alwi... in AL MASEER (Arabic)	Rowan Atkinson... in MR. BEAN	ABDOUN Harrison Ford ... in AIR FORCE ONE	ABDOUN Mel Gibson & Julia Roberts... in CONSPIRACY THEORY	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Winner in the 1997 Cannes festival Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Starring Hisham Yunes and Amal Dabbas

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During the first and only practice session for the K112 Nordic Combined jump, a competitor flies high above Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The final world cup Nordic Combined event began December 13 with the K112 jump on Howelsen Hill followed by an individual 15 kilometre cross country race to determine the Nordic Combined winner (Reuters photo)

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Tunisians agree friendly with Wales

TUNIS (AFP) — Tunisia have agreed in principle to play a friendly with Wales in the buildup to the 1998 World Cup finals where they have been drawn with England, the Tunisian Football Federation announced on Friday. The Tunisians, whose only other World Cup finals appearance was in 1978 finals in Argentina, see Wales as an ideal opponent in preparation for the match with their fellow British team. They have also arranged friendlies with Chile and Paraguay, who they believe compare favourably with the style of play of their two other group opponents Colombia and Romania. Henri Kasperczak, the Tunisian coach, will take his squad to a training camp in Vicenza, Italy, in May and also hopes to arrange a friendly with the Italian national team.

Syria scores World Cup T-shirt deal

DAMASCUS (AFP) — A Syrian public company has scored a contract to provide six million T-shirts for the 1998 World Cup in France, knocking out competition from Asia. Ash-Sharq, a company based near Damascus, was chosen to manufacture the T-shirts because of the "appropriate prices for the products and their good quality," which rivals Asian goods, said an official with Lebanon-based company Teleserve Offshore which played an intermediary role in the deal. The value of the deal was not disclosed, but the Teleserve official said the contract was the result of "cooperation between the public and private sectors." Syria, which has a planned economy, has embarked on reforms to develop the private sector, which has been expanding since the 1980s. The finals of the football World Cup are being held in France in June and July next year.

Orioles sign Carter

BALTIMORE (AFP) — Five-time All-Star outfielder Joe Carter, who hit the most famous home run in Toronto Blue Jays history, signed a one-year, \$3.3 million contract with Baltimore Friday. The 37-year-old Carter hit a game-ending homer off Mitch Williams of Philadelphia in Game Six of the 1993 World Series, giving the Blue Jays their second straight title. But he was not offered salary arbitration by Toronto and became a free agent on Monday. Carter hit 234 with 21 homers and 102 RBI in 1997, becoming the franchise leader in home runs with 203. In 15 major-league seasons with the Chicago Cubs, Cleveland, San Diego and Toronto, Carter has a .259 average with 378 homers and 1,382 RBI. Although he has been an outfielder for most of his career, Carter appeared most frequently as a designated hitter last season.

Italian women warn football fans

ROME (AFP) — Hundreds of Italian football widows, women abandoned every weekend by their soccer-crazed partners, are striking back with their own day of action next month. An association called "Victims of Football" announced Friday that it would hold a mass rally in Ariccia, south of Rome, on January 11. Television presenter Seby Roccaro, one of the brains behind the uprising, said women were not the only victims. "Men have also said they are exasperated because every Sunday (when most top football matches are held in Italy), television, newspapers and families talk about nothing else." One woman on Roccaro's show, from the southern city of Naples, threatened to leave her husband if he continued to abandon her every time his favourite team was playing.

Phoenix Suns' Johnson out for 6 weeks

PHOENIX (AFP) — Phoenix Suns guard Kevin Johnson will be sidelined a minimum of six weeks after having arthroscopic surgery on Friday morning to remove loose cartilage from his right knee. Johnson, who was placed on the injured list Thursday with tendinitis in the knee, had the procedure performed by team orthopedic surgeon Richard Emerson. Johnson was originally expected to be sidelined one week, but has been out since December 1, missing the last six games. Johnson, a three-time All-Star, has missed 127 games due to injury over the last five seasons, contributing to his decision to retire prior to last season. But Suns president Jerry Colangelo and a one-year, \$8 million contract helped convince Johnson to return for one more National Basketball Association season.

Brazilian duo test positive

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP) — Two leading Brazilian water polo players have tested positive for the anabolic steroid nandrolone, the Brazilian swimming federation confirmed on Friday. The pair were named as Eric Borges and Alexandre Lopes, who together have formed one of the most lethal Brazilian water polo attacks of recent times. The federation said it would await the outcome of follow-up tests on Monday before deciding what action to take. If the results are confirmed, Borges and Lopes seem certain to miss the world swimming championships in Perth, Australia next January. The news comes only two weeks after the Brazilian federation slapped a four-year ban on the 100 metres butterfly national record-holder Hugo Duppre for failing a dope test.

Fed-up Connors threatens to boycott Australia

SYDNEY (AFP) — Tennis great Jimmy Connors threatened on Saturday never to return to Australia after a highly critical newspaper report.

The former world number one player and winner of eight grand slam singles titles was speaking after reaching Sunday's final of the over-35s Champions tennis tournament here.

The veteran of more than 100 ATP singles titles said he was considering giving the game away following a report in the city's tabloid Daily Telegraph.

Forty-five year-old Jimbo was fuming over the story headlined, "Go home Jimmy, we don't need you."

It questioned Connors' nerve to "come here and start babbling about entertainment, as if people really need to see another athlete — an over-the-hill one at that — swagger."

Connors said the reason he began the Champions Tour — for ex-professionals aged over 35 — in 1993 was so he could enjoy his tennis and have some fun.

"When it comes out that I'm not supposed to have fun and I'm not supposed to go out and have fun with the people and let them enjoy it and walk away saying they had fun too, then it must be time for me to go," he said.

The article described Connors as "a goose, a mega-brat and a clown" and blamed him for tennis players becoming "overpaid, pampered, pouting pains in the backside."

"In case he has forgotten we (Australia) once had generations of tennis players who knew how to entertain just by playing tennis like sportsmen — not game show hosts," the paper said.

Connors, who is in Australia for the first time in 15 years, said he planned to play about 10 tournaments next year, all in the United States.

Asked if he planned to return here, Connors said: "I don't know. The reason I came here this time was only for two reasons."

"One, because (tour director) Karen Scott Happer asked me to come here and I hadn't been here for 15 years."

"Second, because my daughter and wife had never been here and I thought I'd come down here and enjoy myself... You know, I had, up until a certain point."

Earlier, Connors battled back from 2-5 down in the opening set to beat countryman Tim Wilkison 7-6 (7-0), 6-3 and set up a final Sunday against England's John Lloyd.

Lloyd upset second seed Johan Kriek 7-6 (7-3), 6-1 in Saturday's other semi-final.

2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup Egypt's Al Ahli retain title with impressive 37-27 win

By Roufan Nahhas
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Egypt's Al Ahli were Saturday crowned champions of the 2nd Arab Handball Champions Cup after a 37-27 (18-12) win over United Arab Emirates' Al Ahli in the final match of the ten-team event.

The two teams played a breath-taking match at the Sports Palace which was filled with thousands of fans who had overcome the cold weather to cheer their favourite teams.

Earlier in the day, Egypt's Al Olympi took third place after beating Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli 37-26.

While UAE's Al Ahli opened scoring from a penalty kick in the first minute, Egypt's Al Ahli started their endless and deadly attacks against their opponents.

The experienced players of Egypt's Al Ahli — Jawhar Jawhar, Mohammad Adel and Hazem Awad — gave the UAE team no chance whatsoever to penetrate their solid defence.

Towards the end of the first half both teams were tense resulting in rough play which led the referee to calm down the play.

Egypt's Al Ahli ended the first half 18-12.

In the second half, UAE's Al Ahli tried to narrow the difference but Egypt's Al Ahli had something else in mind — to put more pressure on the UAE's weak defence.

UAE's Al Ahli, led by veteran Ahmad Saqr, did not give up and kept scoring. But the Egyptian team was eager to take the title home — a crown well deserved and acquired.

Egypt's Al Ahli sealed their win 37-27.

Jordan's Al Salt who had finished third in Group A in the preliminary round, had to settle for sixth place after losing to Qatar's Al Rayyan 31-25 (19-12) in Friday's late match.

Kuwait's Al Qadissieh came in seventh place followed by Lebanon's Al Sadaqah in eighth place.

Jordan's Al Arabi came in 9th place after Qatar's Qatar Club opted not to play because of a high number of injured players on the team. The Qatari team thus came in tenth place.

Jordan's Al Arabi had finished last in Group B with only one point from a 35-35 tie with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli in the preliminary round.

Both Jordanian teams missed the cash rewards allocated by the Jordan Handball Federation for the Kingdom's two teams: JD 2,000 for third place, JD1,000 for fourth place and JD500 for fifth place.

No reprieve for French GP; Belgium, Portugal under threat

MONACO (AFP) — The FIA, motor sport's governing body, turned down a French government appeal to have the French Grand Prix reinstated into next season's Formula One calendar here on Friday.

The Belgian and Portuguese Grands Prix are also under threat, though they have been given a stay of execution until December 31.

The FIA said they had not received the guarantees they had demanded from the French government over television coverage.

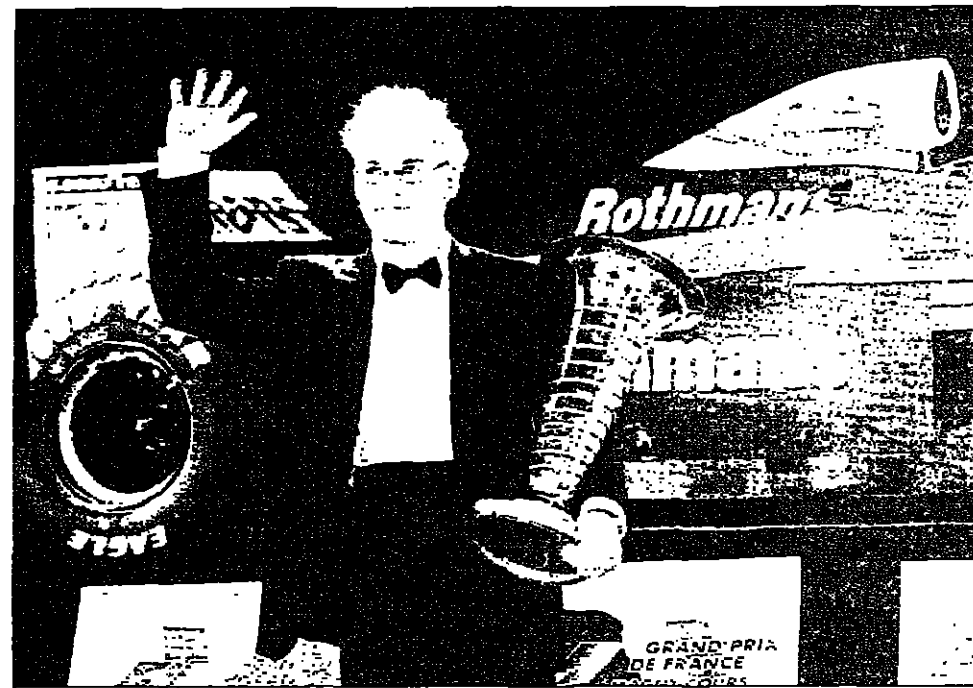
"It has become more and more difficult to organise a race in France," said a FIA spokesman.

"If the Grand Prix was to be reinstated that would make it 17 races next season and that would pose a huge problem for the teams," he added.

However, Marie-George Buffet, the French minister for sport, said she had not given up hope of the race being reinstated at the last moment.

"Last year the French Grand Prix was reinstated in April, and I have every hope that the race will be back in the calendar at the end of January," she said.

The Belgian Grand Prix at Spa, one of the jewels in the F1 crown, is also in



Canadian champion Jacques Villeneuve holds his FIA Formula One World Championship trophy, during the 1997 FIA Prize Giving Gala in Monaco (Reuters photo)

jeopardy because of Belgium's tough new laws on tobacco advertising.

Two weeks ago Belgium voted for a total ban tobacco advertising — a major source of F1 revenue — from 1999, putting it at odds with the European Union directive to phase out such advertising over 10 years.

The FIA has now given the Belgians until December 31 to resolve the mat-

ter.

A decision will also be made on that day regarding the Portuguese Grand Prix. Renovation work at the Estoril circuit must be completed by that date, the FIA said on Friday.

China and South Africa are the likely reserves for Belgium and Portugal if either fails to make the deadline.

The FIA meanwhile announced that the Spanish

town of Jerez would not host another Grand Prix next season — because of the bad behaviour of its mayor.

The Jerez mayor, along with several other local dignitaries, caused a disturbance at the prize giving ceremony for the 1997 European Grand Prix which inconvenienced those handing out the trophies, the FIA explained in a statement.

Hertha Berlin continue revival by toppling leaders

BONN (AFP) — Hertha Berlin continued their revival and extended their unbeaten run Friday evening by defeating league pacemakers Kaiserslautern 2-0.

Rivals Bayern Munich played Borussia Moenchengladbach on Saturday — but regardless of that result Kaiserslautern will stay top of the table since they currently hold a mas-

sive seven point lead.

After a miserable start to the season, Hertha Berlin have now strung together six wins and a draw in their last seven matches and risen from the bottom of the table to a comfortable seventh place.

If their run continues after the winter break newly-promoted Berlin could soon be knocking on the door for a

UEFA Cup spot.

"We said that if the stadium was full and we got the same result as last year in the second division (when Hertha beat Kaiserslautern) then we would be happy. And that's how it turned out," Berlin trainer Juergen Roerber said.

On the Baltic coast Hansa Rostock lost 2-1 to Werder Bremen.

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National Basketball Association			
Boston	97	Washington	88
Charlotte	79	Chicago	77
Philadelphia	106	Denver	91
Indiana	104	Miami	89
Utah	68	Dallas	66
Seattle	111	Portland	98
Vancouver	95	Golden State	88
Atlanta	83	LA Clippers	74
LA Lakers	119	Houston	102

Portuguese First Division			
Maritimo	1	Benfica	0

English League Division One			
Oxford Utd	3	QPR	1
Bristol Rovers	0	Grimsby	4
Division Three			
Cambridge Utd	2	Exeter	1

German First Division			
Hertha Berlin	2	Kaiserslautern	0
Rostock	1	Bremen	2

Confederation Cup			
Group A			
Saudi Arabia	0	Brazil	3
Australia	3	Mexico	1

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XMAS CACTUS: A giant saguaro cactus is seen illuminated with holiday lights at sunset in Chandler, Ariz. Each Christmas season dozens of the native plants are decorated with lights to celebrate the season (AP photo)

Human rights practices in Iran criticised by U.N.

UNITED NATIONS (R) — The U.N. General Assembly on Friday called on Iran to stop executions for non-violent crimes and establish human rights for women and minority religions such as the Baha'is.

The vote was 74 to 32 with 56 nations abstaining on a resolution sponsored mainly by Western nations in the 185-member assembly.

The resolution expressed concern at the "large and increasing number of executions" as well as cases of "torture, degrading treatment or punishment," including the stoning of women and amputations.

It endorsed a report from special investigator Maurice Danby Copithorne, a Canadian, who said human rights improvements in Iran over the past year were imperceptible.

Mr. Copithorne's October report said executions doubled from 1995 to 1996 but he gave

no figures. In 1997, he said 137 people were executed between January and September, an indication the rate may double in 1997 also.

President Mohammad Khatami's election last May has been viewed as a mandate to ease social restrictions imposed by his predecessors and Mr. Copithorne praised his public speeches.

But he said so far the pace of change has been "so modest as to represent little substantive improvement."

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, attending this week's Islamic summit in Tehran, also praised President Khatami as "a man who believes in the rule of law and popular sovereignty."

But at his press conference, he disputed claims that human rights were a Western concept, saying, "Doesn't the Iranian mother or the African mother cry when their son or daughter is tortured?"

Iranian militants attack cinema

TEHRAN (AP) — Militants beat up people coming out of a movie theatre that showed a film depicting characters drinking alcohol and singing, a newspaper reported Saturday.

The Salam daily said 50 members of the Partisans of the Party of God tore down posters outside the Qods cinema in the central Iranian city of Isfahan last Sunday.

The film, "Snowman," has been a hit in Islamic Iran but conservative hardliners argue it violates Muslim norms.

Drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam and banned in Iran. The characters of the film also broke into songs that were popular before the 1979 Islamic revolution but are now considered corrupt.

The Partisans of God is a hardline activist group that

often takes the law into its hands. It was not clear if the activists who attacked the cinema in Isfahan were arrested nor was it clear why the incident was not reported earlier.

The film has been showing in 18 theatres in the capital Tehran alone for more than two weeks. Tickets at the Asr-e Jadid Cinema in Tehran were sold out for four days.

"The Snowman" is the story of an Iranian man who goes to Turkey to try to get a U.S. visa, but falls in love with an Iranian woman who wants to return home. In the end, they both return to Iran.

The film had to wait for more than two years before it was allowed to be screened. It only got approval after the relatively moderate President Mohammad Khatami took office in August.

U.S. envoy sees progress on West Bank troop withdrawal; to visit Jordan today

GAZA CITY (AFP) — U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk met Saturday with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, saying the United States saw progress towards resolving the issue of Israeli troop withdrawals.

Mr. Indyk held two hours of talks with President Arafat in his Gaza City office in a mission aimed at paving the way for meetings next week between his boss, Madeleine Albright, and Mr. Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Mr. Indyk said afterwards he would meet Sunday evening with Mr. Netanyahu after a visit to Amman in the morning.

"The United States remains very committed to moving this process ahead as quickly as possible, so that we can achieve an agreement and start the final status talks as soon as possible," Mr. Indyk told journalists.

"Albright feels that this process is now moving forward there is some progress being made. There is still a lot of hard work to be done," he said.

Ms. Albright is to hold her second round of talks with President Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu in 10 days on Thursday in Europe in a bid to win an agreement on a

promised Israeli troop pull-back from parts of the West Bank.

She is expected to press Mr. Netanyahu to present a full plan for the withdrawals in order to allow the two sides to enter long-delayed negotiations for a final peace treaty and break the nine-month deadlock in the peace process.

In late November, Mr. Netanyahu's ministers agreed in principle to conduct a withdrawal, but since then they have been unable to agree on an amount of land which will satisfy the U.S., the Palestinians, and hardliners in the Israeli government opposed to a large handover.

The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) slammed the Israeli government for its two-week internal debate over the troop withdrawal, saying none of the proposals floated so far by Mr. Netanyahu's ministers meet Palestinian expectations.

"What is coming out of the Israeli government does not show any commitment to the peace process or the signed agreements," said a statement issued after President Arafat met with his cabinet and PLO leadership in Gaza Friday evening.

"It shows intentions to render the redeployments meaningless and to get rid of the interim peace accords. Our

position is one of strict adherence to the Oslo accords both in letter and spirit," it said.

The Oslo interim peace accords commit Israel to conduct three stages of troop withdrawals by mid-1998, which the Palestinians say should eventually put 90 per cent of the West Bank under their control.

Mr. Netanyahu's proposals would combine the first two phases of the withdrawal, which were due earlier this year but never occurred, but require the Palestinians to forgo the third phase and enter immediately into negotiations over a final peace treaty.

Mr. Netanyahu has also said he would not allow the redeployment until after a five-month test period, during which the Palestinians must show a stiffer crackdown against anti-Israeli activists, a condition the Palestinians have rejected.

Israeli press reports have said the proposals considered by Israeli ministers so far would put six to eight per cent more of the West Bank under control of the PNA.

The Israeli cabinet is to meet Sunday to consider withdrawal plans, and Foreign Minister David Levy has pressed for them to confirm a plan before Mr. Netanyahu's talks with Ms. Albright on Thursday.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat leaves after a meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk after they had finished their meeting at Mr. Arafat's office in the Gaza Strip Saturday (Reuters photo)

EU leaders look to Middle East peace process

LUXEMBOURG (AFP) — European Union leaders on Saturday expressed concern at the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process and pledged to reinforce the EU's role in the region, in draft conclusions to a two-day summit. A British Foreign Office spokesman added that when Britain takes over the rotating EU presidency from Luxembourg next year, advancing the Middle East peace process would be "a top priority."

"We are well-placed to talk to the Americans and with the countries in the region to try to give a boost to the peace process," he said. A draft text being debated Saturday on the final day of a two-day EU summit reiterated earlier calls for peace in the Middle East and "urged all the parties to honour their commitments under existing agreements."

EU offers Turkey place in conference

LUXEMBOURG (AFP) — European Union leaders agreed Saturday to offer Turkey a place in a pan-European Conference to be set up next March in a bid to defuse the Turks' anger at being excluded from the bloc's enlargement plans.

The move, which had been in doubt because of reservations from Greece, comes despite growing signs that Turkey will refuse to take up the offer.

The conference will be launched on March 12, just three weeks before the EU is due to start formal accession negotiations with five central European states and Cyprus.

Turkey has told the EU that it does not consider membership of the new conference as going far enough in recognition of its ambition of joining the Union.

The EU has insisted it is unrealistic for Turkey to expect to be invited to negotiations in the short term but has not ruled out membership in the longer term.

In the conclusions to a two-day summit here, the bloc's leaders declared Turkey "eligible" for membership and pledged that its candidacy would be treated according to the same criteria as every other applicant country.

If Ankara changes its mind and decides to participate in the conference, it will have to first make a statement that it is prepared to submit its various disputes with Greece to the jurisdiction of the

International Court of Justice in The Hague.

The EU summit conclusions also stated that countries which are members of the conference must commit themselves to good neighbourliness, respect for other countries' sovereignty and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Behind this diplomatic language lies another EU condition of Turkey being included in the conference: the withdrawal of its threat to annex the occupied northern part of Cyprus if it is excluded from the enlargement process.

The prospects of Turkey agreeing to these kind of conditions appears to have receded with the deterioration of the atmosphere in its contacts with the EU over the last week.

This was underlined on Saturday when the speaker of the Turkish parliament warned that deputies could refuse to ratify NATO's integration of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in retaliation for the perceived EU snub.

If Turkey is excluded from the EU's enlargement process, "it will be very difficult for the Turkish parliament to ratify the inclusion of new members into NATO," the speaker Hikmet Cetin said.

He added: "If Turkey is not granted a candidate status, the freezing of political ties with the EU for some time would be inevitable."

Palestinians to seek \$4.5 billion from donors at Paris conference

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians are to seek some \$4.5 billion in aid and ask the world community to stick by their pledging support for another five years, at a conference of donor nations in Paris on Sunday.

The Palestinian delegation to the two-day conference is to submit a three-year plan for development, requiring \$3.5 billion in aid, said Walid Siyam, a general director in the Palestinian planning ministry.

In addition, they will ask donor nations to pay up more than \$1 billion pledged over the past three years but which has never been paid to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), Mr. Siyam told AFP on Saturday.

International cooperation minister Nabil Shaath and finance minister Mohammad Nashashibi are heading the Palestinian delegation to the Paris meeting which groups the United States, the European Union, Japan and Canada along with other donor nations.

The Palestinians will also ask donors to extend their support for the self-rule authority's development plans until 2002, saying the stalemate in the peace process with Israel has prevented them from implementing their plans as scheduled over the past five years.

"The donor program was supposed to last five years

beyond the signing of the first Oslo agreements [in 1993]. But we are asking the donor nations to extend their support for another five years," Mr. Siyam said.

"The barriers in the peace process and Israel's failure to stick by its commitments to us have made it impossible for us to build our projects on schedule," he said.

Mr. Siyam pointed to Israel's failure to allow the opening of Palestinian air and seaports in the Gaza Strip or the creation of a land-link for Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza, all projects considered central to building the Palestinian economy.

Frequent Israeli closures of the occupied territories since 1993 have also held up materials needed for projects.

"We have created plans over the past five years, but much of it has been left undone. We have clinics that were never built, infrastructure that was never finished. We need another five years of support to do the actual building," he said.

Israel committed to the opening air and seaports and safe passages in interim peace accords with the Palestinians, but months of negotiations have so far failed to win their implementation.

The 1998-2000 plan to be submitted in Paris — the first ever three-year plan by the Palestinians who have in the past put forward year-

by-year projects — seeks about \$1.2 billion each year from donor nations.

It details projects in four areas: infrastructure, development of the authority's institution, including security forces, health and social development, and improving economic productivity.

Mr. Siyam said the Palestinians were presenting "a clear plan in hopes of getting clear commitments to the projects."

"In the past some donor nations have failed to pay their full pledges, sometimes because of their own financial difficulties, but sometimes because they change their mind and decide they don't like a particular project."

"These projects clearly outline our needs and the needs of Palestinian non-governmental organisations for the next three years," he said.

Donor countries pledged in 1994 to give \$2.4 billion in aid over five years to help the Palestinian economy take off, but so far only \$900 million has been paid, Mr. Siyam said.

The Palestinians will seek the remainder of that pledge in addition to the \$3.5 billion for the three-year plan.

Mr. Shaath has said he will also ask the conference to commit to holding a summit of foreign ministers from the donor nations in Washington next October to give a new push to the donor program.



British Queen and PM sued for 'plotting with the devil'

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian court decided to postpone its decision in an action against Queen Elizabeth II and British Prime Minister Tony Blair over the death of Princess Diana, a court official said. The court decided to wait until late January before issuing a ruling on whether the case launched by an Egyptian lawyer was admissible under Egyptian law. In his suit, the plaintiff, Nabih Wahsh, is seeking damages of \$170,000 against the queen and the British prime minister for "plotting with the devil" to kill Princess Diana because she was in love with a Muslim.

Qadhafi's son takes pet tigers to Vienna

VIENNA (AFP) — When he packed his bags to head off to college in Vienna, Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's son knew he just couldn't leave his two pet tigers behind. So he did the obvious thing — finding them a home in the Austrian capital too. In an interview with the weekly News, Qadhafi's son Saif, 25, explained how his two tigers are temporarily housed in a Viennese zoo. "They have grown up with me," Saif told the News. "I didn't want to be without them, so I found them a little place in Vienna. I go to the Schonbrunn zoo every two days. I feed them and stroke them," explained Saif, adding "they are my little cats."

Mother Teresa said to sell jewels — Italian ex-PM's wife

ROME (AFP) — Maria Pia Fanfani, the wife of former Italian premier Amintore Fanfani, has auctioned off her jewels on advice by Mother Teresa, raising \$350,000 for her charity "Insieme per la pace" (Together for Peace). Fanfani told the weekly Oggi that she had worked for good causes since 1949, but it had never occurred to her to sell her jewellery until she met Mother Teresa in Rome two years ago. The nun told her: "Stop only pretending that you are doing something for the poor. I can see that you are wearing jewellery that must have cost a great deal. Set an example and sell them. Think how many needy people you could make happy."

Jagger became father again

LONDON (AFP) — Veteran rocker Mick Jagger, 54, became a father for the sixth time after his wife Jerry Hall gave birth to a baby boy in London, sources close to the couple said. Gabriel Luke Beauregard Jagger, who weighed in at 3.6 kg, is the couple's fourth child. Hall, 41, and the baby were doing fine, said the rocker's spokeswoman Fran Curtis in New York. Jagger "is clearly very excited," Curtis said. "The both are."

Virtual memorials — a way to grieve on the net

TORONTO — Instead of grieving over faded photographs or weathered tombstones, Internet-surfing mourners can now gather around their computer screens and download memories of departed loved ones. A Toronto funeral service company has designed a memorial site on the Internet where for \$116, memories can be digitally preserved. "A lot of families will have the body cremated and they may scatter the ashes over a lake or by a cottage, so there's no memorial for people to go to. We thought the website was a good idea because it's there all the time," said Douglas McCann, owner of Aftercare, the company that devised the idea.

American showdown with Netanyahu looms over West Bank future

By Barry Schweid

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. pressure on Israel could intensify if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejects Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's demand that America's closest Mideast ally cede a larger chunk of the West Bank to the Palestinians.

The biggest club Ms. Albright could wield would be declaring U.S. support for a

Palestinian state. Many Israelis already think the land-for-peace process will lead to statehood for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Administration officials said Thursday that was not Ms. Albright's intention. But the denials were phrased in ways that do not exclude a strong but general affirmation of U.S. support for Palestinian aspirations.

The United States also could

put pressure on Israel by demanding that it carry out its commitment to three more withdrawals on the West Bank by mid-1998.

Conversely, if Mr. Netanyahu came through with a promised pullout somewhere between the 6 per cent to 10 per cent floated by Israel and the minimum of 30 per cent demanded by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, further withdrawals could be put off.

But that would depend on the Palestinians agreeing to get started quickly on negotiations for a final settlement, administration officials said.

The American pressure tactics so far have been subtle. President Bill Clinton, for instance, did not invite Mr. Netanyahu to the White House last month, when the prime minister was in the U.S. The absence of an invitation was perceived by Israel as a snub and was not lost on Mr. Netanyahu's foes.

Similarly, the prime minister

thought Mr. Clinton would extend an invitation for a visit in early December, but that did not materialise either.

Instead, Ms. Albright has held two rounds of separate talks with Mr. Netanyahu and President Arafat in Europe and plans a third round next week — with the Israeli premier in Paris and with President Arafat in Geneva.

Administration officials, speaking on condition they would not be identified, said Ms. Albright has not set any deadline for Israel to announce a withdrawal.

The officials said U.S. demands are being made on the Palestinians as well, mostly in the area of taking tougher precautions against terrorism. President Arafat has played it cool. In Geneva last Saturday, after meeting with Ms. Albright, he said almost apologetically he was not "asking for anything more than is in the agreements between us and the Israelis."

The 1993 and 1995 Oslo

accords leave it to Israel to decide how much land to yield.

Administration officials say there is not any connection between the administration's handling of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and the ongoing dispute with Iraq over U.N. weapons inspections.

Indeed, Ms. Albright warned that "time is passing out" for a Mideast settlement weeks before the Iraqi inspection issue came to a boil.

Still, pressure on Israel is appreciated in Arab circles where the Clinton administration found scant support for its campaign against Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Netanyahu plans to bring maps to Paris, mostly to highlight Israel's security concerns. He has emphasised the "gravity" of the withdrawal issue, and its impact on future generations of Israelis.

At this stage, diplomatic sources said, he does not intend to offer Ms. Albright any "percentages" of the West

Bank that Israeli troops would relinquish to the PNA, which is in full or partial control of 27 per cent of the territory.

That could change as Mr. Netanyahu and his ministers confer before the Paris meeting with Ms. Albright. But he sounded dug-in this week, saying in Eilat, Israel, that "no external pressures, no external dictates will work — not in determining the timetable, the substance of the discussions, nor the results."

Mr. Netanyahu gave an even stronger message last week to the Europeans, some of whom have taken Israel to task. Pressure, the prime minister said, would be counterproductive.

In some pro-Israel quarters, anxiety is intense.

Thursday's Washington Times carried a full-page advertisement headed "The Albright-Indyk war against Israel," referring to Martin Indyk, the former White House official and U.S. ambassador to Israel who is

now the assistant secretary of state for the Near East.

"The 80 per cent of American Jews who supported and voted for Bill Clinton are now finding they may have voted for the preferred candidates of the PLO/Hamas and the Arabs," read the ad placed by a group called the Committee for the Preservation of the Land of Israel.

Mr. Indyk was to be in the Middle East today to meet with leaders of Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, a U.S. official said.

New to the job, Mr. Indyk is making a series of visits to countries covered by his state department bureau.

The stop in Damascus was bound to raise speculation that peacemaking could be revived by the U.S. on that front. But the official, who demanded anonymity, said progress depended on making headway first between Israel and the Palestinians.

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